

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

Evidence Synthesis Group (ESG)

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Approved by: Illir Hoxha – Managing Director

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Executive Summary

The Evidence Synthesis Group (ESG) is committed to maintaining an inclusive, respectful, and equitable organisational environment in which all individuals have fair opportunities to contribute, develop, and lead. This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) establishes ESG's formal framework for promoting gender equality in its organisational culture, governance, recruitment and career progression practices, research and training activities where relevant, and safeguarding procedures.

The Plan has been developed as a practical and proportionate policy document for an organisation of ESG's size and structure. It is designed to support both internal organisational development and external project-related use, including applications in contexts where a formal Gender Equality Plan is expected as an institutional requirement.

The GEP covers the key process-related components commonly required for a robust institutional framework: formal endorsement and publication, dedicated implementation responsibility, progressive data collection and monitoring, awareness-raising and training, and concrete measures across five core thematic areas. These are: work-life balance and organisational culture; gender balance in leadership and decision-making; gender equality in recruitment and career progression; integration of the gender dimension into research and training content where relevant; and measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

ESG will implement this Plan over a three-year period through its existing leadership, HR, and administrative structures. Progress will be monitored through practical indicators and internal follow-up, with a formal review taking place at least once every two years. The Plan is intended to remain a living institutional document and may be updated as the organisation develops, as policies are strengthened, or as external requirements evolve.

1. Purpose and Commitment

The Evidence Synthesis Group (ESG) is committed to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and equitable working environment in which all individuals have equal opportunities to contribute, develop, and lead. ESG recognises gender equality as both a core organisational value and an important condition for research excellence, responsible leadership, staff wellbeing, and institutional credibility.

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) establishes ESG's formal commitments, implementation framework, and priority measures for promoting gender equality across the organisation. It is intended to support fair and transparent internal practice while also demonstrating ESG's institutional readiness for partnerships, funding applications, and collaborative work in contexts where a Gender Equality Plan is expected.

Through this Plan, ESG commits to: promoting equal treatment and equal opportunity regardless of gender; preventing discrimination, harassment, and gender-based violence; supporting fair and transparent organisational procedures; encouraging gender-sensitive thinking in research and training, where relevant; and monitoring progress through structured reviews and continuous improvement.

The Plan applies to all persons working with or for ESG, including leadership, employees, researchers, analysts, consultants, administrative staff, collaborators, and, where relevant, trainees or contractors engaged in ESG activities. ESG adopts this document as a living institutional framework that will be implemented, monitored, and updated over time in line with organisational development and evolving requirements.

2. Organisational Profile

The Evidence Synthesis Group (ESG) is a research-focused organisation dedicated to producing rigorous evidence syntheses and original research that inform decision-making across public health, healthcare systems, and clinical practice. ESG supports a broad range of stakeholders, including public institutions, industry, clinicians, researchers, and policymakers, through the application of robust methods, critical analysis, and high standards of scientific integrity.

ESG currently has an approximate team of 20 people, including a core management team and a research and development team. As an organisation working in knowledge-intensive and methodologically demanding fields, ESG recognises that excellence depends not only on technical rigour but also on fair, inclusive, and supportive organisational practices that enable all team members to contribute meaningfully and develop professionally.

ESG operates on a hybrid model, combining in-person and remote work. This model allows flexibility while also requiring deliberate attention to equitable access to information, opportunities, participation in meetings, team communication, professional visibility, and decision-making processes. ESG therefore understands gender equality not as a stand-alone compliance requirement, but as an important component of organisational quality, staff wellbeing, responsible leadership, and long-term institutional development.

The organisation has formalised management, administrative, and human resources functions, as well as leadership and recruitment structures. ESG also has a website on which key institutional documents, including this Gender Equality Plan, will be published to support transparency and accountability. The organisation already has internal policies in place in several relevant areas, including conduct, recruitment, leave, harassment-related protections, and complaints procedures, while additional policies are being further developed where needed to strengthen the institutional framework.

3. Scope of Gender Equality Plan

This Gender Equality Plan applies to ESG's internal organisational practices and, where relevant, to its research, training, and professional activities. It establishes a framework for action in five core areas: work-life balance and organisational culture; gender balance in leadership and decision-making; gender equality in recruitment and career progression; integration of the gender dimension into research and training content where relevant; and prevention of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

The Plan is intended for both internal implementation and external institutional use. It may be referenced in project applications, partnership discussions, and organisational documentation as evidence of ESG's commitment to gender equality and inclusive governance. The GEP should be read alongside other relevant internal policies, procedures, and codes of conduct, including those related to recruitment, complaints, leave, harassment, safeguarding, and professional behaviour.

4. Governance, Roles, and Responsibilities

ESG will implement this Gender Equality Plan through a formal governance structure that ensures leadership accountability, operational coordination, and organisation-wide participation. Overall responsibility for the adoption, endorsement, and institutional oversight of the Plan rests with the Managing Director, Ilir Hoxha, who will serve as the senior approving authority for the GEP and will ensure that the organisation maintains a visible commitment to its implementation.

The Managing Director is responsible for formally approving the Plan, supporting its publication, promoting organisational awareness of its importance, and ensuring that gender equality is considered in relevant management, staffing, and strategic decisions. Leadership oversight also includes periodic review of implementation progress, consideration of annual monitoring findings, and support for updates where institutional needs or project requirements evolve.

At the operational level, ESG will assign responsibility for day-to-day coordination of the Gender Equality Plan to an appropriate internal function, focal point, or small working group. Depending on internal structure and capacity, this coordinating role may be assigned to a member of management, administration, HR, or another designated staff member with sufficient authority and access to relevant information. The designated coordinating function will support the practical implementation of the Plan by tracking actions, coordinating inputs across teams, supporting data collection and reporting, facilitating awareness-raising activities, and identifying areas where procedures or guidance need further development.

Because ESG has formally assigned HR, management, and administrative roles, implementation of the GEP will be integrated into existing organisational processes rather than treated as a stand-alone exercise. Human resources and administrative functions will support implementation in areas such as recruitment, onboarding, leave-related practice, policy alignment, and recordkeeping, where applicable. Managers and team leads will be expected to apply the principles of the Plan consistently in supervision, team coordination, work allocation, professional development, performance-related processes, and workplace communication.

All staff members, consultants, researchers, and collaborators engaged by ESG are expected to uphold the principles reflected in this Plan. This includes contributing to a respectful and inclusive work environment, avoiding discriminatory or exclusionary behaviour, participating in relevant awareness or training activities, and raising concerns through appropriate channels when issues arise. ESG recognises that responsibility for gender equality is shared across the organisation, even where leadership has ultimate accountability.

The GEP governance approach is designed to be proportionate to ESG's current size and structure while remaining sufficiently robust for project applications, institutional use, and future organisational growth. As the organisation evolves, ESG may further formalise the coordination mechanism, for example, through the establishment of a small equality working group, periodic management reviews, or clearer procedural links with other internal policies and compliance functions.

5. Publication and Institutional Endorsement

This Gender Equality Plan is intended to function as a formal institutional document of the Evidence Synthesis Group. Following internal review and finalisation, the Plan will be formally approved and endorsed by the Managing Director, Ilir Hoxha, on behalf of the organisation. This endorsement will confirm ESG's institutional commitment to gender equality and to the implementation, monitoring, and periodic review of the measures outlined in the Plan.

In line with good practice and commonly required project eligibility standards, ESG will make the Gender Equality Plan publicly available through its official website or another appropriate public organisational platform. Public availability of the GEP will support transparency toward staff, collaborators, partners, funders, and external stakeholders, and will demonstrate that gender equality is embedded in ESG's organisational framework rather than addressed only on an ad hoc basis.

Publication of the Plan will be accompanied, where appropriate, by basic internal communication to ensure that staff members are aware of the document, understand its purpose, and know where to access it. ESG may also reference the GEP in onboarding materials, institutional profiles, partnership documentation, and relevant project application materials to ensure that the Plan is both used in practice and externally visible.

The published version of the Plan should include the approval date, version number, signatory authority, and the planned review cycle. Where material changes are introduced following annual review or organisational updates, the public version of the document should be updated accordingly to maintain accuracy and transparency.

6. Dedicated Resources and Capacity

ESG commits to allocating appropriate and proportionate resources to implement this Gender Equality Plan. As an organisation of approximately 20 people, ESG recognises that resource allocation may not take the form of a large, dedicated department; however, meaningful implementation still requires clearly assigned responsibility, management attention, staff time, and integration with existing organisational systems.

In practical terms, ESG will dedicate human resources to coordinate and support implementation of the Plan through its existing formalised management, HR, and administrative roles. This includes assigning responsibility for follow-up on implementation actions, supporting policy alignment, facilitating communication and awareness activities, and contributing to the collection and review of organisational information relevant to gender equality. ESG aims to ensure that these responsibilities are explicitly recognised within internal workflows so that the GEP remains an active management instrument rather than a purely declarative document.

Dedicated resources under this Plan may include, as appropriate: staff time for coordination and annual review; support for internal policy development or revision; time for participation in training or awareness activities; administrative support for data gathering and recordkeeping; and leadership engagement in reviewing progress and authorising improvements. Where ESG identifies gaps in expertise or capacity, the organization may also seek external guidance, templates, or technical support to strengthen implementation in a proportionate and feasible way.

ESG acknowledges that capacity-building is itself part of resource allocation. For that reason, the organisation will seek to embed gender equality considerations into routine organisational processes, including onboarding, policy development, recruitment planning, management practice, staff development, and project preparation. This approach is intended to make implementation sustainable and realistic within ESG's current operational model.

7. Data Collection, Monitoring, and Annual Reporting

ESG recognises that effective gender equality planning must be supported by appropriate evidence. The organisation is currently in the process of strengthening its approach to staff data collection and will progressively establish a proportionate system for gathering, organising, and reviewing sex- and/or gender-disaggregated data relevant to its workforce, management structures, and organisational practices, in accordance with applicable legal, ethical, and data protection standards.

Given ESG's current size and development stage, the organisation will adopt a practical and phased approach to data collection. Initial efforts will focus on establishing a reliable baseline to inform planning and future monitoring. Subject to data availability, confidentiality requirements, and legal compliance, ESG will work toward collecting and reviewing information such as overall workforce composition; representation across management, research, and administrative roles; applicant and recruitment patterns where feasible; participation in training and professional development; contract or engagement types; and other indicators that may help identify potential inequalities or trends requiring attention.

The purpose of data collection under this Plan is not only descriptive, but also developmental. ESG will use available data to better understand its organisational profile, assess whether opportunities and responsibilities are distributed fairly, identify areas where gender-related imbalances may exist, and support evidence-informed adjustments to policies or practices. Because the organisation is still developing some aspects of this system, ESG acknowledges that data completeness may initially be limited. This Plan therefore supports a gradual strengthening of monitoring processes.

ESG will review relevant data at least once per year and prepare a concise annual internal progress report on the Gender Equality Plan's implementation. The report should summarise actions completed during the reporting period, note any relevant data trends or observations, identify challenges and priority gaps, and propose adjustments or next steps for the following year. The annual review should be discussed at the management level and used to inform updates to implementation priorities, indicators, and internal procedures.

Where appropriate, ESG may also use the reporting process to align the Gender Equality Plan with related organisational policies, project requirements, staff development priorities, and broader institutional governance mechanisms. Over time, annual reporting should help ensure that the GEP remains a practical, evolving, and evidence-informed framework.

8. Training and Awareness-Raising

ESG is committed to promoting awareness, understanding, and practical application of gender equality principles throughout the organisation. As a hybrid organisation with an international team and formalised internal structures, ESG recognises that awareness-raising and training are necessary to ensure that equality commitments are reflected in daily practice, workplace culture, recruitment processes, decision-making, and team collaboration.

Training and awareness activities under this Plan will be proportionate to ESG's size and context while still providing meaningful support for implementation. These activities may include onboarding content, internal guidance materials, short awareness sessions, team discussions, or targeted briefings for staff with supervisory, recruitment, project coordination, or decision-making responsibilities.

Priority themes may include equal opportunity principles, respectful communication, inclusive teamwork in hybrid settings, unconscious bias, fair recruitment and evaluation practice, prevention of discrimination and harassment, and awareness of reporting and safeguarding routes. Where relevant to ESG's substantive work, training may also address how sex and gender considerations can be reflected appropriately in research design, evidence interpretation, and knowledge products.

Because ESG already has several relevant internal policies in place and continues to strengthen those still being developed, awareness and training activities will also help ensure that staff understand applicable internal standards, expected conduct, and available procedures. ESG will aim to document completed awareness and training activities in a basic, practical way so that implementation can be tracked over time.

9. Strategic Objectives and Measures

ESG adopts the following strategic objectives and measures in order to translate its commitment to gender equality into practical organisational action. These measures are designed to be proportionate to the size and structure of the organisation while still demonstrating a clear institutional framework suitable for internal implementation and external project-related use.

9.1 Work-life balance and organizational culture

ESG is committed to maintaining a respectful, inclusive, and supportive organisational culture in which all staff members can contribute effectively and sustainably. As a hybrid organisation with an international team working across time zones, ESG recognises that equality is closely linked to how work is organised, how communication takes place, and how flexibility is applied in practice.

To support work-life balance and an equitable organizational culture, ESG will maintain and further strengthen flexible working arrangements where operationally feasible. This includes flexibility in working hours where appropriate, taking into account role requirements, project deadlines, collaboration needs, and time zone differences. ESG will seek to apply flexibility fairly and consistently so that staff members with caregiving responsibilities, family obligations, health-related needs, or other legitimate circumstances are not disadvantaged.

ESG will also seek to foster a culture in which workload expectations, meeting arrangements, response-time norms, and internal communication practices are managed reasonably and respectfully. In a hybrid and international working environment, particular attention will be given to ensuring that team members have equitable access to information, opportunities to participate, and visibility in discussions and decision-making, regardless of physical location or work schedule.

Where feasible and consistent with organisational policies, ESG will support family-friendly and wellbeing-oriented practices, including fair access to leave, reasonable flexibility around personal and family responsibilities, and a workplace culture that respects staff wellbeing. Managers and team leads will be encouraged to contribute to this culture by applying inclusive and considerate management practices, including attention to workload distribution, meeting scheduling, and communication habits.

ESG will periodically review feedback, internal experience, and available workforce data to identify whether aspects of the working culture may unintentionally disadvantage particular groups and to inform future adjustments where needed.

9.2 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

ESG is committed to promoting fair and balanced participation in leadership, coordination, and decision-making structures. The organisation recognises that diverse leadership contributes to stronger decision-making, wider perspectives, and a more inclusive institutional culture.

At present, ESG's management structure includes both women and men, serving in management or leadership roles. ESG views this as an important basis for continuing to promote balanced representation over time.

In future leadership-related appointments, committee participation, project leadership assignments, and internal decision-making structures, ESG will aim to ensure fair consideration of qualified individuals of all genders. While appointments will remain merit-based and aligned with organisational needs, ESG will seek to avoid unnecessary gender imbalances where suitable candidates are available and to create conditions in which all staff members have equitable opportunities to demonstrate readiness for leadership.

In practical terms, ESG will encourage transparent consideration of leadership potential, support inclusive participation in committees or working groups where these exist, and pay attention to how leadership and visibility opportunities are distributed across the organisation. Where relevant, management review processes may consider whether project coordination roles, internal responsibilities, and representation functions reflect a fair and balanced approach.

ESG also recognises that leadership balance is shaped not only by formal appointments but by access to experience, mentoring, visibility, and developmental opportunities. The organisation will therefore seek to ensure that staff members of all genders

have fair opportunities to contribute to decision-making, lead workstreams, and build the experience needed for future advancement.

9.3 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

ESG is committed to ensuring that recruitment, selection, promotion, and career development processes are fair, transparent, merit-based, and free from gender bias. Because staffing decisions directly affect both organisational opportunity and representation, ESG considers this area a central component of its Gender Equality Plan.

The organisation already uses formalised recruitment structures and standardised recruitment processes. ESG will continue to apply written criteria, structured assessment approaches, and consistent interview practices in order to support objectivity and fairness in candidate evaluation. Where possible and appropriate, recruitment decisions should be based on clearly defined role requirements, documented selection criteria, and relevant professional competencies.

ESG will strive to ensure that vacancy announcements, job descriptions, and recruitment-related communication use gender-neutral and inclusive language. The organisation will also seek to avoid wording, assumptions, or informal practices that could discourage applications from qualified individuals on the basis of gender or reinforce stereotypical expectations regarding roles, responsibilities, or seniority.

Career progression within ESG should similarly be guided by transparent and objective considerations, including performance, competencies, responsibilities, contributions, and organisational needs. ESG will seek to apply fair standards regarding promotion, leadership development, access to stretch assignments, and participation in professional development or mentoring opportunities. Managers and decision-makers involved in progression-related decisions will be expected to apply these standards consistently.

Where feasible, ESG will also monitor recruitment and progression patterns over time to identify any unintended disparities and whether procedural improvements are needed. As part of its broader equality commitment, ESG aims to create an environment in which professional development opportunities are accessible and visible to all staff members.

9.4 Integration of the gender dimension into research and training content

ESG recognises that, as a research- and evidence-focused organisation, gender equality is relevant not only to internal organisational practice but also to the design and delivery of research and learning activities. ESG does not select, evaluate, or assign opportunities on the basis of sex or gender; however, the organisation acknowledges that sex- and gender-related considerations may be methodologically, substantively, or ethically relevant in certain research, evidence synthesis, training, and capacity-building contexts.

Accordingly, ESG will encourage consideration of sex and gender dimensions in research design, evidence synthesis, data analysis, interpretation, reporting, and dissemination whenever such considerations are relevant to the research question, study population, intervention, outcome, or intended use of findings. This does not imply that all projects must include a gender-focused analysis, but rather that ESG will seek to consider whether such dimensions are relevant and should be addressed in a scientifically appropriate manner.

In the context of evidence synthesis and original research, this may include attention to whether available evidence reports sex-disaggregated findings, whether differential effects or barriers are relevant, whether research populations are adequately described, and whether the interpretation of findings should acknowledge gender-related considerations that may affect applicability, implementation, or equity.

Because ESG also undertakes training and mentoring activities, the organisation will seek to incorporate relevant gender-sensitive perspectives into methodological learning, supervision, and professional development where appropriate. This may include raising awareness of inclusive research practice, equitable participation in learning environments, and the responsible treatment of sex and gender variables in research processes.

This objective is intended to strengthen the quality and relevance of ESG's work while remaining aligned with the organisation's scientific standards, methodological rigour, and commitment to fairness.

9.5 Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

ESG adopts a zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence, sexual harassment, harassment, bullying, discrimination, retaliation, and other forms of inappropriate or abusive conduct. The organisation is committed to maintaining a safe and respectful working environment in which concerns can be raised seriously, confidentially, and without fear of retaliation.

ESG already has HR functions in place to handle complaints and related personnel concerns. Under this Plan, HR will continue to serve as a key internal point of contact for receiving, managing, or appropriately escalating reports of harassment, discrimination, or other conduct concerns, in accordance with applicable internal procedures and relevant legal standards.

The organisation will ensure that staff members are informed, at least in basic terms, about expected standards of conduct, available reporting routes, and the principles that apply when concerns are raised. These principles include, to the extent possible, confidentiality, fair and respectful handling of reported matters, protection against retaliation for good-faith reporting, and timely and appropriate follow-up.

Where relevant, ESG will review and further strengthen existing internal policies on conduct, harassment, complaints, and safeguarding to ensure clarity, accessibility, and consistency. Awareness-raising and onboarding materials should also reinforce that inappropriate conduct is not tolerated and that all staff members share responsibility for contributing to a safe and respectful work environment.

Through these measures, ESG aims not only to respond to incidents appropriately but also to reduce the likelihood of harm by promoting clear expectations, respectful behaviour, and a workplace culture grounded in dignity and accountability.

10. Implementation Plan

This Gender Equality Plan will be implemented over a three-year period from the date of formal approval. ESG will use this period to translate the commitments contained in the Plan into practical organisational measures, proportionate monitoring processes, and periodic institutional review.

Implementation of the Plan will be coordinated through ESG's existing leadership, HR, and administrative structures, with overall oversight resting with the Managing Director and operational follow-up assigned to the designated internal coordinating function. ESG will seek to embed the GEP into existing organisational processes rather than treat it as a stand-alone compliance exercise.

During the initial phase of implementation, ESG will prioritise formal adoption and publication of the Plan, internal communication of its purpose, clarification of implementation responsibilities, and alignment with existing policies and procedures where relevant. This phase will also include continued development of the organisation's approach to staff data collection and the establishment of a practical baseline for future monitoring.

During the second phase, ESG will focus on strengthening implementation across the five strategic areas covered by the Plan. This includes maintaining flexible and equitable work arrangements, supporting an inclusive organisational culture, promoting balanced participation in leadership and decision-making, reinforcing fair recruitment and progression practices, integrating relevant sex and gender considerations into research and training activities where appropriate, and ensuring that safeguarding and complaints mechanisms remain clear and accessible.

During the final phase, ESG will consolidate learning from implementation, review available evidence and internal experience, identify areas requiring adjustment, and prepare the organisation for the next cycle of the Gender Equality Plan.

11. Indicators and targets

ESG will monitor implementation of this Gender Equality Plan through a set of practical and proportionate indicators and targets. These indicators are intended to support internal learning, accountability, and continuous improvement rather than create excessive administrative burden. Given the organization's current size and development stage, the emphasis will be placed on meaningful progress, documented implementation, and the gradual strengthening of institutional practice.

The following indicators and targets will guide implementation during the three-year period of this Plan:

1. Formal adoption and publication of the GEP

Indicator: Gender Equality Plan formally approved by the Managing Director and made publicly available through the ESG website or another appropriate public platform.

Target: Completed within the initial implementation phase and maintained as a current public document.

2. Assignment of implementation responsibility

Indicator: Internal responsibility for coordination of the GEP formally assigned to an appropriate function, focal point, or working arrangement.

Target: Coordination responsibility clearly designated following approval of the Plan.

3. Staff awareness and internal communication

Indicator: Staff informed about the existence, purpose, and accessibility of the GEP and its connection to relevant internal policies and procedures.

Target: Basic internal communication completed after adoption of the Plan, with at least one awareness-raising activity or reminder conducted during each review cycle.

4. Training and awareness-raising activity

Indicator: Delivery of at least one relevant awareness, briefing, onboarding, or training-related activity addressing gender equality, inclusive practice, respectful conduct, bias awareness, or safeguarding.

Target: At least one documented activity delivered during each two-year review cycle, with additional activities encouraged where feasible.

5. Gender-sensitive recruitment practice

Indicator: Recruitment templates, vacancy language, and/or selection procedures reviewed to support gender-neutral and fair recruitment practice.

Target: Relevant templates and practices reviewed at least once during the implementation period, with revisions introduced where needed.

6. Fair progression and leadership opportunity review

Indicator: Management consideration of whether leadership opportunities, project coordination roles, and progression-related opportunities are being distributed fairly and transparently.

Target: Equality considerations incorporated into management review discussions at least once during each review cycle.

7. Data collection and monitoring development

Indicator: Progressive establishment of a practical system for collecting and reviewing relevant staff or organisational data related to gender equality.

Target: Initial baseline approach developed during the first phase of implementation, with periodic refinement over the life of the Plan.

8. Integration of gender-relevant considerations into research and training where appropriate

Indicator: Research and training teams encouraged to consider whether sex and gender dimensions are relevant to project design, evidence interpretation, training content, or dissemination.

Target: Relevant consideration promoted as part of methodological and professional practice during the implementation period.

9. Safeguarding and complaint route clarity

Indicator: Staff awareness of HR as an available reporting route for complaints or concerns related to harassment, discrimination, or inappropriate conduct.

Target: Reporting route referenced in internal communication, onboarding, or related policy guidance during the implementation period.

10. Periodic review of the GEP

Indicator: Formal review of the Gender Equality Plan and its implementation status conducted in accordance with the review cycle.

Target: At least one formal review completed every two years, with updates introduced as necessary.

Note: These indicators may be refined over time as ESG's data systems, policies, and implementation experience mature. The organisation may also add supplementary internal indicators where useful for specific projects, reporting obligations, or organisational priorities

12. Reporting and Review Mechanism

ESG will use a proportionate reporting and review process to assess implementation of this Gender Equality Plan, document progress, and identify areas for improvement. The purpose of this mechanism is to ensure that the GEP remains active, relevant, and responsive to the organisation's evolving needs rather than remaining a static policy document.

Implementation progress should be documented through brief internal follow-up coordinated by the designated responsible function, with input from leadership, HR, administration, and other relevant staff where appropriate. Reporting may include information on completed actions, awareness or training activities, relevant policy developments, available data trends, practical challenges encountered, and priorities for the next implementation period.

ESG will conduct a formal review of the Gender Equality Plan at least once every two years. This review should assess whether the commitments and measures in the Plan remain appropriate, whether implementation has been meaningfully advanced, whether indicators and targets are being met or require adjustment, and whether additional measures are needed in light of organisational growth, evolving practice, or external requirements.

Although the formal review cycle is set at two years, ESG may also undertake interim reflection or light internal follow-up when needed, especially if there are significant organisational developments, policy updates, staffing changes, or project-related requirements that affect the relevance or implementation of the Plan.

Findings from the review process should be considered by management and used to determine whether the GEP should be reaffirmed, revised, expanded, or operationally strengthened. Where material changes are made, the public version of the Plan should be updated accordingly so that published information remains accurate and current.

13. Complaints, Safeguarding, and Confidentiality

ESG is committed to ensuring that concerns related to discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, retaliation, or other inappropriate conduct can be raised through clear and accessible internal routes and addressed in a fair, respectful, and confidential manner. The organisation recognises that an effective Gender Equality Plan requires not only preventive measures, but also practical mechanisms for protection, response, and accountability.

Within ESG, the HR function serves as the primary internal route for reporting complaints and concerns of this nature. Staff members, consultants, and other relevant personnel should be able to approach HR to report concerns, seek guidance, or request that an issue be handled in accordance with applicable internal procedures. Where the nature of the concern requires escalation or involvement of management, this should be done carefully and only to the extent necessary for appropriate review and response.

All reported concerns should be handled with due regard for confidentiality, procedural fairness, and the dignity of all persons involved. ESG will seek to ensure that information is shared only on a need-to-know basis and that reported matters are managed to protect privacy as far as possible while still allowing appropriate action to be taken.

ESG also affirms a principle of non-retaliation. No person should be disadvantaged for raising a concern in good faith, participating in a review process, or supporting the reporting of inappropriate conduct. Retaliatory behaviour is itself inconsistent with ESG's standards and should be treated seriously.

Where gaps are identified in existing procedures, ESG will continue to develop or refine relevant policies and guidance so that staff members have a clearer understanding of reporting routes, available support, expected timelines or steps where feasible, and the standards that apply to workplace conduct. This section of the Plan should be read together with any related internal policies on conduct, complaints, harassment, safeguarding, and disciplinary procedures.

14. Approval and Review Cycle

This Gender Equality Plan is adopted as a formal institutional document of the Evidence Synthesis Group for a three-year implementation period from the date of approval. The Plan will be reviewed formally at least once every two years and may be updated earlier if required by organisational developments, legal obligations, or project and funder requirements.

Approval of this Plan confirms ESG's institutional commitment to promoting gender equality, maintaining fair and inclusive organisational practices, and implementing the measures set out in this document in a practical and proportionate manner.

Approved by:

Ilir Hoxha

Managing Director

Evidence Synthesis Group (ESG)

Signature:



Date: 26 November 2025

Version: Version 1.0

Once approved, this document should be published on the official ESG website as the organisation's formal Gender Equality Plan and made accessible to staff, partners, funders, and other relevant stakeholders.