



GENDER EQUALITY COMMITTEE (GEC)
INSTITUTIONAL ACTION PLAN
FOR GENDER EQUALITY
UNIVERSITY OF THE PELOPONNESE,
2021-2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Gender Equality Committee (GEC) established at the University of the Peloponnese aims at the promotion of equality policies and the creation of an educational, working and social environment, free from gender discrimination. The current Institutional Action Plan for Gender Equality presents the actions put forward for the implementation of the aforementioned goals.

The GEC regards gender as a concept not limited to the biological categories of “male” and “female” but rather as inclusive of male and female identities, as well as other gender forms. Social gender identities which are shaped within cultural and social contexts refer to ideas, images, perceptions, (verbal and non-verbal) self-definitions etc. and dictate roles and practices.

In its long history, feminism explored how in certain social, political and cultural circumstances, gender divisions, as well as multiple forms of gender inequality are produced and perceived in the family, education, the workplace, politics, as well as in public and private life. Socializing processes, upbringing, education, culture and language are conducive to the consolidation of ideas and values with regard to gender qualities and roles in every aspect of life. The forms of gender inequality or discrimination are quite often linked with other factors such as race, age, social class, national origin, educational background; therefore, they should not be dealt with separately but cross-examined along these factors.

Both the study of social gender and the prevention of gender discrimination and inequality have been at the center of various collective actions, institutions and policies. At the initiative of UNO, the Declaration of the Humans Rights was adopted in 1948; on December 18, 1979, the UNO General Assembly

adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), an integral element of which was the elimination of inequalities between the two genders. In Greece, this Convention was validated under Law no. 134/1983. Also, in accordance with the UNO Sustainability Report (UNO, Agenda 2030) and the goals of sustainable development, it is expected that gender discrimination be eliminated in education and that all women and girls be empowered.

Notwithstanding the above conventions and sanctions, more than forty years later, gender inequalities persist across the globe. The financial and social crises, wars, pandemics, climate-environmental problems and established stereotypes and biases still undermine gender equality, while women's rights are still violated, and their social standing is downgraded in many societies.

At the same time, inequalities are observed in relation to the LGBTQI+ community, among others, on issues of education, equal treatment at the workplace, health provision and legal treatment. In Greece, it was only recently (2021) that the National Strategy on the Equality of LGBTQI+ people was drawn up and put forward actions in order to address discrimination inflicted on LGBTQI+ persons, protect and treat them equally. As highlighted in the text of the National Strategy on the Equality of the LGBTQI+, planning these actions is seriously impeded by the lack of formal evidence and analytical data about LGBTQI+ people. Gender equality is desired at both universities and every democratic society.

2. GENDER INEQUALITY AT UNIVERSITIES

As highlighted in the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2025 (see <http://www.opengov.gr/minlab/?p=5333>), "as far as the Gender Equality Index

is concerned, Greece ranks last among the European Union countries for the year 2020, based on data from 2018, remaining at the same position since 2010, although there was a slight index improvement in comparison to 2010 and 2017." Besides, serious inequalities are highlighted in relation to gender and domestic violence, women's participation in social and political life, the job market, education and job positions in fields such as ICT and research.

The situation is quite similar in Greek universities; herein gender divisions are reflected in the percentage of women and men which themselves constitute or lead to inequalities that concern, among others,

- the various groups of university members (the student body, administrative staff, faculty members, the rest of the teaching and research staff, etc.). For instance, whereas women's percentage in the student body may be higher than that of men in a given Department, women may be disproportionately represented among faculty members in the same Department. Such findings may apply to the Institution as a whole.
- the various academic fields and their respective university departments. For example, women have a higher representation in Humanities faculties as compared to their male counterparts who make up the majority in Polytechnic Schools.
- Hierarchy rank (e.g. the percentage of women and men in each rank of the academic hierarchy) and participation in key administrative roles in Higher Education Institutions (e.g., female members of the academic staff are inadequately represented in academic authorities and the same applies to female members of administrative staff, who are poorly represented in the higher ranks of administration).

Furthermore, serious initiatives have not been undertaken by universities to support LGBTQI+ people as members of the academic community. The text of the National Strategy on the Equality of the LGBTQI+ people (2021) highlights relevant problems in Higher Education and puts forward suggestions in order that the universities address these issues successfully: “A case in point is the revision of disciplinary regulations in Higher Education institutions so as to protect LGBTQI+ members of the academic staff from discrimination; facilitate, in accordance with Law no. 4491/2017, name changes on academic transcripts in case they proceeded to change personal details such as their first name and gender; and, in general, create a safe and inclusive environment for faculty members and students. Similarly, the establishment and development of support infrastructure for LGBTQI+ students could be examined. Such support infrastructure for LGBTQI+ students aims at developing innovative methods, services and practices for the promotion of equal participation of LGBTQI+ students in university life. Lastly, in the context of self-governance, it is essential that universities develop courses and research programs on gender, sexuality and gender identity issues.”

2.1. The current situation at the University of the Peloponnese

As can be seen by the first attempts to draw up a gender map at the University of the Peloponnese, our university is no exception to the general picture. More specifically, gender divisions are observed in the representation of women and men. For instance, men are overrepresented in academic staff, while women are overrepresented in administration staff. Besides, the percentages of female students in departments of Social Sciences and Humanities are by far higher as compared to their male counterparts in departments of Engineering and ICT, wherein male students form the majority. Lastly, as evidenced by the preliminary compilation of data about faculty members in key administrative

positions (e.g. rectors, deputy rectors, deans, head of departments), gender inequalities still persist with regard to women's representation.

The current Code of Ethics and Good Practice at the University of the Peloponnese highlights the need to avoid not only gender biases but also all kinds of discrimination both in academic work and research. In particular, it is stressed that any form of discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, color, national or ethnic origin, descent, language, gender identity or gender characteristics, religion, private life, sexual orientation, disability or chronic illness and marital, financial and social status must be avoided.

An important and highly symbolic first step would be to directly address gender discrimination issues in the legal documents of our University such as the Internal Regulation so as to be harmonized with the Code of Ethics and Good Practice of the same institution and Law no. 4604/2019; article no. 12 of this law refers to the inclusion of gender in administrative documents, stipulating that "the use of any formulations that imply or include gender biases in administrative documents is prohibited". Article no. 14 further dictates that "defying the principle of equality, access to equal opportunities, and equal treatment of men and women on employment and work issues, in accordance with Law no. 3896/2010, as well as employing discriminatory gender language constitute disciplinary offences".

In accordance with the same law as well as the Code of Ethics and Good Practice of our university which reflects its intention to avoid discrimination, positive results are expected in other aspects of inequality manifested in everyday university life. It is also expected that the entire academic community will respond and contribute to the work of the GEC so that our university will improve in this regard, thus setting a good example to the student body and

the society within which it operates. Furthermore, as the University of the Peloponnese is a fairly new university, it has shown vigorous dynamism, and is therefore in the privileged position to attain this goal.

3. GENDER-RELATED ACTIONS AT GREEK UNIVERSITIES BEFORE THE PASSAGE OF LAW NO. 4589/2019

In several Greek universities action on gender had already been undertaken, prior to the establishment of the GEC in accordance with the recent legislative provision. For example,

- Gender Committees have already been established at the University of the Aegean since 2014 (the Committee “Aegean 50:50 Balanced Participation” – see the Institutional Action Plan on Gender Equality at the University of the Aegean, <https://www.aegean.gr/equality-committee>) and at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (the “Gender and Equality Committee – see <https://www.auth.gr/com-gaei-meetings/>)
- Gender and Equality Bureaus have already been set up; for example, the Gender and Equality Bureau “THEFILIS” at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens established in 2009 (see <http://thefyliscentre.uoa.gr/>), as well as similar centers such as the Center for Gender Studies at the Department of Social Policy at Panteion University set up in 2006 (see <https://www.genderstudies.panteion.gr/>)
- Undergraduate and postgraduate programs with a close focus on gender have already been on offer; for instance, the Interdepartmental Undergraduate Course on Gender and Equality Studies (Undergraduate Course THEFYLIS since 2003-2004) at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens as well as the Postgraduate Programmes “Women

and Genders: Anthropological and Historical Approaches” (since 2003, see http://www.sa.aegean.gr/msc/postgraduate_gender.html) and “Gender and New Educational and Work Environments within the Society of Information” at the University of the Aegean (see <http://www.pse.aegean.gr/pms-gender/>)

- Action plans such as the plan of the University of the Aegean mentioned above have already been drawn up.

Actions as the ones outlined above were conducive to raising gender awareness, educating people on gender-related issues and promoting relevant policies.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning the contribution of research programs which aim at promoting gender equality. A case in point is the program “TARGET: Taking a Reflexive Approach to Gender Equality in Research and Innovation” (<https://www.eliamep.gr>).

The GEC of our University comes to fill the lacuna in gender-related actions at the University of the Peloponnese. In this respect, the experience of other universities or research centers will be invaluable.

4. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GENDER AND EQUALITY COMMITTEES

As far as state involvement is concerned, it was only in 2019 that actions on gender in Greek Higher Education were drawn up; in accordance with article no. 33, Law no. 4589/2019 (Government Gazette 13/issue A'/29-1-2019) which provides for the establishment of Gender Equality Committees across all

universities, Gender Equality Committees started being set up at Greek universities, including the University of the Peloponnese.

These committees are not salaried and serve as advisory bodies to the Senate and the administrative boards of faculties and departments in order to promote equality in both the institutional operation and academic life.

In accordance with the current law, the Gender Equality Committee of each University is assigned the following responsibilities:

- a) it draws up action plans so as to promote and ensure true equality in education, research and administration at the University and compiles an annual report to be submitted to the Senate
- b) It suggests steps be taken by the relevant bodies so as to promote equality and combat sexism
- c) It informs and educates the members of the academic community on gender and equality issues
- d) It offers mediation services in case complaints about discriminatory treatment or sexual harassment are filed
- e) It promotes the establishment of a postgraduate program, preparation of dissertations and Ph.D. theses, and organization of seminars and lectures with a primary focus on gender
- f) It promotes studies and research on gender issues
- g) It offers assistance to victims of discrimination in case of complaints about discriminatory treatment. Issues of support offered to victims of discriminatory treatment by the GEC are regulated by the Internal Regulations of each University.

4.1. The Gender Equality Committee at the University of the Peloponnese

The establishment of the Equality and Gender Committee at the University of the Peloponnese was implemented upon the decision of the University Senate (Assembly no. 108, Decision 34/16.10.2020).

The GEC at the University of the Peloponnese holds regular meetings, at least once a month, in order to draw and organize its activities. Furthermore, it participates in the national network of university GECs and attends the working groups, activities and events organized both by the network and the rest of the Committees. In order to raise gender equality awareness and promote the active participation of the members of the academic community in its work, the GEC has already held a competition for its logo and organized an event on “Gender, Equality and Discriminations”.

Besides, in accordance with the law, the GEC works, among others, towards enriching and publicizing the gender map and the inventory of university courses on gender, laying down a Gender Code of Conduct etc.

At institutional level, actions on gender do not have a long history at the University of the Peloponnese, it being a relatively new institution, whose inception coincided with the establishment of the GEC. Data about the courses and fields of study at the University of the Peloponnese has shown that hardly any faculty members have gender studies as their primary field of research; very few courses focus on gender-related issues and funded research programs on gender as their primary or secondary focus have not been implemented.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE GENDER EQUALITY COMMITTEE

The following objectives and recommended actions of the GEC, derived from its responsibilities as delineated in Law no. 4589/2019 and briefly set out above, are presented on the temporal axis –short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives. Immediate intervention but also creation of an educational, working and social environment at the University of the Peloponnese, free from gender discrimination with the participation –if possible– of the majority of the academic community fall within the Committee’s goals.

5.1 Short-term objectives

1. To deliberate with the authorities of the University of the Peloponnese and the academic community on the objectives and recommended actions of the GEC
2. To liaise with all departments so as to set up an internal network at the University of the Peloponnese for the promotion of gender issues (a delegate from each department will serve as a liaison with the GEC). To maintain and strengthen networking with the GICs of other universities, groups of academic staff and other members of the Greek university community (e.g. administrative staff, male and female students) interested in gender issues (e.g. GIC Network, The Greek Association of Female Professors-ELEGYF)
3. To enrich curricula; To complete the compilation of an inventory of courses on gender offered at the University of the Peloponnese and encourage Departments to enrich their curricula with similar courses.
4. To examine the prospect of assigning short scale research essays, group essays etc. on gender and gender inequality and discrimination as part of courses already on offer in collaboration with academic staff interested in these issues. It is also advised that students prepare dissertations on gender issues. All these will be included in a program funded by the Research Committee and the Senate of the University of the Peloponnese.

5. To compile data; To enrich the gender map of the university (search for additional indices and data, longitudinal study, data for every university department, including those recently established).
6. To organize events and programs on its own, or in collaboration with other institutions, so as to inform, raise awareness, train and educate members of the academic community on gender and gender discrimination issues (e.g. gender, identity, sexual orientation, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, sexist language).
7. To raise awareness of the need for gender-neutral and non-sexist language (events, seminars, training of the entire academic community).
8. To carry out research; The University of the Peloponnese should assign gender research projects to a group or groups of male and female students from individual departments or from different departments. This research could complement the documentation of the current situation at the University of the Peloponnese.
9. To promote volunteer work; To foster the establishment of volunteer groups and offer them support at our university but also in the wider society in the Peloponnese region with a view to studying gender and developing awareness activities on issues related to gender and the fight against gender discrimination, as well as any form of gender violence or inequality in social and political life, education, the workplace etc.

5.2. Mid-term goals

1. To contribute to laying down regulations and rules and review and amend the existing legal documents of the University
 - to make additions and changes to the Internal Regulations (extensive references to gender issues—commitment to prevent discrimination)
 - to draw up more regulations on gender equality to be included in the University's Code of Ethics

- to draw up a Code of Ethics and Good Practice on issues of sexual harassment in the academic community
2. To contribute to the establishment of equality and non-discrimination policies at the University so as to eliminate any gender-related hindrances to professional career and secure funding so as to implement research programs and staff an Equality Bureau and Observatory. Such policies and actions as the ones delineated above could include:
- Events and programs launched by the GEC itself or in collaboration with other university committees, services and bodies so as to offer training and raise awareness on gender and gender discrimination as well as to publicize University policies on gender and gender discrimination.
 - The prospect of setting up a body to support victims of gender discrimination (e.g. sexual harassment) and coordinate the existing university institutions, services and bodies.
 - Policies on the equal participation and representation in university boards and decision-making bodies, equal access to resources and research projects as well as equal division of labor in every field, that is in teaching, research, administration (e.g. to define the goals set by the university for equal division of funding in actions and research projects among genders).
 - Policies to ensure that members of the academic community lead a balanced professional and personal life (e.g. allow maternity/paternity leave, parental leave or leave for family reasons regardless of gender).
 - Documentation and promotion of good practices on gender equality issues at national and international level.
 - Documentation and promotion of good practices on equality issues at departmental, faculty and institutional level.
3. To contribute to establishing gender neutral and non-sexist language:

- To inform and train administrative, academic and other teaching staff as well as the student body; To support and assist, if need be, the adoption and implementation of the “Guide for the use of non-sexist language in administrative documents” in university administrative and legal documents such as the Internal Regulations and the Code of Ethics, as well as the university’s public discourse (department webpages, announcements, press releases). This Guide was issued in 2018 as part of the action “Inclusion of gender equality in administrative language” under the auspices of the General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality; Furthermore, to provide support so that services and institutions will be renamed accordingly, e.g. from “Student’s Advocate” to “female and male student’s Advocate”.

4. To enrich courses and research on gender issues:

- To contribute towards developing more courses on gender across Departments (e.g. hire female/male teachers to teach this subject) and encourage the inclusion of gender in courses that do not exclusively focus on gender but could integrate this dimension.
- To secure funding from university resources to carry out research on gender and gender discrimination. Provide information and support so as to secure funding programs from external sources for similar research.
- To encourage students to undertake projects (e.g. dissertations) and theses on gender or gender-related issues.

5. To develop a network with institutions that work on gender and gender discrimination issues both in Greece and abroad and in the wider region within which the University has its premises; the Gender Equality Committee cooperates with these institutions/individuals/groups and utilizes their knowledge and experience by organizing events and seminars.

5.3 Long-term goals

1. To enrich courses and research on gender issues:

- To call for new professorships for gender studies so as to develop this field in our university.
- To set up postgraduate courses on gender and explore the prospect of collaboration with other universities so as to establish an inter-university program on gender studies.

2. To contribute to establishing equality and non-discrimination policies and practices at our university so as to remove any gender-related hindrances to professional career; To secure funding from the University authorities for the operation of relevant services and the promotion of gender policies at the University:

- To promote the establishment of institutions/services and collaborate with existing university institutions and services (e.g. establish an Equality Bureau staffed with experts, to operate a phone line or/and set up an email address on gender issues in collaboration with institutional bodies such as the “Student’s Advocate” and programs such as Wecare) for the support of gender discrimination victims.
- To set up memorandums of cooperation with local boards, hospitals and other institutions so as to provide support to victims of gender discrimination and harassment.
- To promote policies on equal participation and representation in boards and decision-making processes, to ensure equal access to resources, research projects and equal division of labor in every field, that is in teaching, research and administration.
- To promote policies so as to support parents, regardless of gender, to strike a balance between professional and personal life (e.g. part-time employment, suspension of their career while maintaining the right to resume it, assistance to new parents with regard to timetable

and working conditions so as to be able to combine work with child upbringing, establishment of support infrastructure, e.g. university nursery or, if not possible, to offer financial assistance to cover the cost of the nursery).

5.4 Action progress documentation and evaluation (feedback and review of actions)

Apart from the work of the Gender Equality Committee, support and active participation by authorities and members of the academic community (student body, administrative, academic, laboratory, research and other teaching staff, etc.) as well as allocation of necessary financial and human resources are required to attain the above goals. Reducing, let alone eliminating gender inequalities, is a process that takes time and is linked with social processes and policies followed outside the university. However, universities by their very nature both can and must operate as models of good practice, fighting gender discrimination and inequality both for the sake of the student body and for the sake of the wider society.