



INOVA

**AGENCY FOR INNOVATION, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA**

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2026–2029

JANUARY 2026



INOVA

AGENCY FOR INNOVATION, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Legal Framework

- Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” Nos. 6/12, 30/13, 166/14 and 150/15, and “Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” Nos. 53/21 and 39/25);
- Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (“Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” No. 258/2020);
- Labour Relations Law (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” Nos. 62/05, 106/08, 161/08, 114/09, 130/09, 50/10, 52/10, 124/10, 47/11, 11/12, 39/12, 13/13, 25/13, 170/13, 187/13, 113/14, 20/15, 33/15, 72/15, 129/15, 27/16, 120/18, and “Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” Nos. 110/19, 267/20, 151/21, 288/21, 111/23, 39/25, 74/25 and 124/25);
- Law on Administrative Officers (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” Nos. 27/14, 199/14, 48/15, 154/15, 5/16, 142/16 and 11/18, and “Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” Nos. 275/19, 14/20, 215/21, 99/22 and 208/24);
- Law on Public Sector Employees (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” Nos. 27/14, 199/14, 27/16, 35/18 and 198/18, and “Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” Nos. 143/19, 14/20 and 208/24);
- National Strategy for Gender Equality 2022–2027 (“Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” No. 170/2022);
- Law on Protection against Harassment at the Workplace (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” Nos. 79/13 and 147/15, and “Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” Nos. 103/21 and 124/25);
- EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and the requirements of the Horizon Europe programme;
- DIRECTIVE (EU) 2023/970 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL (of 10 May 2023) to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms.

1. Introduction

The Agency for Innovation, Science, Technological Development and Entrepreneurship (INOVA) is an independent body of state administration established by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, to which it is accountable for its work.

Its mission is to promote innovation, scientific and technological development, and entrepreneurship, and to facilitate access to financial resources for SMEs. Through the design, implementation, and financing of support programmes, INOVA contributes to: the development of SMEs, including start-ups; the development of research, innovation, and entrepreneurial activities and infrastructure; cooperation between academia and industry; and alignment with international innovation and business standards.



INOVA

AGENCY FOR INNOVATION, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

As a public institution with a strategic role in shaping the national innovation ecosystem, INOVA recognises gender equality as a fundamental human right, a legal obligation, and a key factor for inclusive and sustainable economic development. This Gender Equality Plan 2026-2029 (GEP 2026-2029) has been developed in accordance with national legislation and European Union policies and establishes a comprehensive and systematic framework for advancing gender equality within INOVA and its programme activities.

2. Objectives and Tasks of the GEP 2026-2029

The overall objective of GEP 2026–2029 is to ensure equal opportunities, treatment, and rights for all employees regardless of gender, sexual orientation, nationality, age, or other individual characteristics. INOVA applies the principles of gender equality across all its activities while maintaining high standards of competence and quality. INOVA strives for an equal distribution of influence between women and men across all programme areas, equal working conditions, and balanced participation in various professional groups, councils, and other working bodies.

INOVA is guided by the principle that diversity creates added value for society, and that gender equality enables better utilisation of the most important social capital – people. INOVA is committed to promoting equality and preventing discrimination across all its programme activities by identifying and eliminating factors that contribute to inequality.

This Plan sets out the objectives and measures to be implemented during the period 2026–2029.

Based on INOVA’s planned activities for 2026, the main objectives for the duration of the GEP 2026–2029 are as follows:

- ensuring compliance with national and European gender equality legislation;
- promoting equal opportunities and non-discrimination in employment and decision-making;
- integrating the gender perspective into programmes for financing innovation, scientific and technological development, and entrepreneurship;
- strengthening institutional capacities for gender equality.

This GEP applies to:

- all employees of INOVA;
- management and governing bodies;
- commissions, evaluation, and advisory bodies;
- external experts, professionals, and collaborators engaged by INOVA.

The implementation of the GEP 2026–2029 is based on the principles of equality, transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, respect for diversity, and zero tolerance for discrimination.

3. Institutional Framework and Responsibilities

3.1 Gender Equality Working Group



INOVA

AGENCY FOR INNOVATION, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

In accordance with legal obligations, INOVA has appointed a Coordinator and a Deputy Coordinator for Equal Opportunities. Their responsibility is to submit an Annual Report on the implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities to the competent institutions.

Based on existing research and best practices for institutionalising gender equality, it is proposed to establish an internal Gender Equality Working Group (GEWG), with the primary responsibility of creating equal opportunities in the workplace and allocating resources to promote gender equality in organisational operations. The Working Group will consist of at least three members. The Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator for gender issues shall be members of the Working Group. The Working Group shall be appointed following the adoption of the GEP 2026–2029.

The Working Group will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the GEP 2026–2029 and proposing and monitoring activities to be implemented on an annual basis. Monitoring results will be reported annually and will be based on indicators and gender-disaggregated data linked to INOVA's Annual Work Programme. In addition to monitoring, emphasis will be placed on the implementation of regular gender equality training for staff and decision-makers.

Responsibilities of the GEWG:

- coordination of the implementation of the GEP 2026–2029;
- monitoring compliance with the legal framework;
- collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data;
- proposing measures to address identified inequalities;
- preparation of annual reports to management.

The tasks of the GEWG also include initiating, monitoring, and/or undertaking activities in the following areas:

- promoting gender equality in recruitment, career advancement, and remuneration;
- supporting work–life balance;
- preventing and addressing discrimination and gender-based harassment;
- ensuring gender-responsive innovation and entrepreneurship programmes;
- integrating gender aspects into training courses organised by INOVA, where applicable;
- initiating and/or organising regular training for all staff involved in recruitment processes, as well as related training such as gender-responsive budgeting for procurement and finance departments, where applicable;
- sharing experiences, good practices, and development trends in the field of gender equality internally within INOVA, including through internal workshops.

3.2 Responsibility of Management

INOVA's management bears ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this GEP 2026–2029 and for ensuring adequate human and financial resources.

4. Gender Equality in Employment and Career Development



INOVA

AGENCY FOR INNOVATION, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

INOVA applies the principle of equal opportunities in accordance with the Labour Relations Law and the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

INOVA's human resources policy defines all relevant aspects of employment, including recruitment and staff orientation policies. The policy emphasises INOVA's firm belief in equal employment opportunities for every individual, regardless of race, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, disability, marital status, veteran status, or any other professionally irrelevant characteristic.

Measures:

- formulating all job advertisements in a gender-neutral and inclusive manner;
- inclusion of non-discrimination clauses in recruitment procedures;
- systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data on employment, promotion, training, and staff turnover;
- transparent evaluation and promotion criteria.

5. Work–Life Balance and Gender-Sensitive Organisational Culture

INOVA promotes working conditions that enable the reconciliation of professional and private responsibilities, in accordance with the Labor Law.

Measures:

- flexible working hours and remote work arrangements, where applicable;
- promotion of equal use of maternity, paternity, and parental leave;
- internal rules on working hours and digital communication;
- support for returning to work after maternity or extended leave;
- regular surveys on work–life balance and organisational climate;
- use of inclusive and gender-sensitive language in communication.

6. Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-Making

INOVA recognises the value of gender diversity for quality governance and decision-making.

Measures:

- striving for gender balance in managerial and governing bodies;
- gender-balanced composition of commissions and panels;
- training and awareness-raising activities on unconscious bias;
- leadership development programmes for underrepresented genders.

7. Integration of the Gender Perspective into Innovation and Funding Programmes

As a state agency for financing innovation, INOVA integrates gender equality into the design and implementation of its programmes.

Measures:



INOVA

AGENCY FOR INNOVATION, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

- inclusion of gender aspects in public calls, where relevant;
- encouragement of applicants to consider the gender dimension in projects;
- gender-balanced evaluation panels and mentors;
- collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data on beneficiaries;
- support for women's entrepreneurship and promotion of women-led start-ups and innovation initiatives.

8. Prevention of Mobbing, Discrimination, and Harassment

INOVA applies a zero-tolerance policy towards mobbing, discrimination, harassment, and gender-based violence.

INOVA is committed to creating an organisational environment based on respect and integrity for all who work with or collaborate with the organisation. INOVA ensures that challenges related to sexism and sexual harassment are appropriately addressed and that any form of discrimination is avoided.

Measures:

- clear internal procedures for reporting and handling complaints;
- confidential and secure reporting mechanisms;
- protection against pressure in the workplace;
- regular training and awareness-raising activities.

9. Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation

The GEWG will monitor the implementation of the GEP 2026–2029 through established indicators and prepare annual reports. The findings will be used to improve policies and practices.

10. Validity and Revision

This Gender Equality Plan applies for the period 2026–2029 and shall be subject to revision after one year from its adoption or earlier if required by legal or institutional changes.

Date: 20.02.2026
Arch. No.: 01-33416



Director
Daniela Dimovska



INOVA

**AGENCY FOR INNOVATION, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA**

ANNEX I

Action Plan (2026–2029)

Priority Area	Activity	Indicator	Timeline	Responsible Unit
Governance	Establishment of a Gender Equality Working Group	Working Group established	2026	Management
Employment	Gender-neutral job advertisements and non-discrimination clauses	100% compliance	Ongoing	Gender Equality Working Group
Salaries	Gender pay gap analysis	Report	2026 and 2028	Programme Departments
Work-Life Balance	Rules on flexible work	Rules adopted	2026	Programme Departments
Leadership	Monitoring gender balance	Annual data	Annually	Programme Departments
Programmes	Gender-disaggregated data on beneficiaries	Included in reports	Annually	Programme Departments
Training	Gender equality training	Min. 1 per year	Annually	Programme Departments
Protection	Mechanism for reporting harassment, mobbing, and/or discrimination	Functional mechanism	2026	Legal Department