



GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

Version May 2022

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1 Introduction

In accordance with the provisions of the Belgian law of 12 JANUARY 2007 aiming to monitor the application of the resolutions of the World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995 and the integration of the gender dimension in all policies (known as the "Gender Mainstreaming Act") as well as the legal commitments¹, and the provisions of the Horizon Europe Programme of the European Commission, Belnet, as a state department under separate management from the Federal Science Policy (BELSPO²), endorses the need for a Gender Equality Plan (GEP).

This GEP, based on the generic Gender Equality Plan prepared by BELSPO, is specific to Belnet and was approved by the Belspo Executive Committee on 13 May 2022. As such, it also recognises the need for specific actions on gender equality. Belnet is committed to continue the implementation of this GEP according to the modalities described in this document.

The current GEP takes up the framework established by the European Commission and develops the four mandatory requirements (so-called "building blocks") for a Gender Equality Plan, as well as four recommended thematic areas. It builds on the work started in the previous legislature by the Gender Mainstreaming Network consisting of BELSPO, Belnet and the 10 FSI. FSI stands for Federal Scientific Institute and is abbreviated as FSI in what follows.

¹ This Gender Equality Plan is part of a series of legal commitments to combat discrimination between men and women. The plan is in line with political commitments, as set out in

- in the [Gender Mainstreaming Act of 12 January 2007](#), and in the Royal Decree of 26 January 2010 implementing the Act,
- in the [Federal Plan Gender Mainstreaming](#) adopted by the Federal Council of Ministers on 11 June 2021,
- in the [Federal Coalition Agreement of 2019](#),
- in the [policy statement of 2 November 2020](#) by the Secretary of State for Science Policy, Thomas Dermine (House of Representatives, Doc 55 1610/016),
- in the [Governance Agreement 2021-2024 of Belnet](#).

² **BELSPO**: The task of the Federal Science Policy (BELSPO) is to prepare, implement and evaluate Federal Science Policy on behalf of the Government and in support of the competences of the Federal Government.



2 Plan of action: mandatory requirements

The plan of action based on the **four mandatory requirements** (building blocks) is explained below. It will be developed annually in line with the overall strategy and objectives of Belnet.

2.1 Public document

This Gender Equality Plan is public and was published in June 2022 on our website under the tab "about".

In addition, the Gender Equality Plan has also been published and communicated within our organisation in both national languages (Dutch and French). The document can be found on the intranet since June 2022. It was also communicated to all employees via our monthly newsletter in June 2022

This plan was drawn up in collaboration between the Management, several internal departments and the Personnel & Organisation Department (P&O) of Belnet.

Action 2.1.1.

Keep the Gender Equality Plan up-to-date with new information or initiatives concerning the gender policy within Belnet.

Action 2.1.2.

Make these changes known to the outside world by publishing the most recent version on our website.

Action 2.1.3.

Communicate these changes also internally, by means of our monthly newsletter and the intranet, in order to inform the staff about the ongoing actions and initiatives on gender equality. This also contributes to creating awareness within our organisation about this topic.

2.2 Dedicated resources

Within the P&O department of Belnet, **two contact persons** have been appointed. These persons are responsible for the follow-up of the GEP, the communication and the implementation of the actions within Belnet. Belnet directly participates in the GM network through P&O.

The contact persons designated by Belnet are : Freya Goeminne (Freya.Goeminne@belnet.be) and Céline Vandeputte (Céline.Vandeputte@belnet.be).

Action 2.2.1.

Follow up the progress of the GEP and the actions within Belnet.

Action 2.2.2.

Belnet is represented in the GM network. This means that we communicate our initiatives, questions and actions here and follow them up.

2.3 Data collection and monitoring

Belnet's P&O department has the **gender-disaggregated personnel data** at its disposal. In addition to the breakdown of statistics by gender and in order to get an idea of the respective situation of women and men in a given area, **'gender statistics'** will be determined. These are data broken down by gender that are analysed to examine prejudices or differences between men and women in a given area.



Within the framework of its personnel policy, Belnet, as a federal government, is first and foremost bound by the **language laws** (of "public policy"). Nevertheless, special attention will be paid when assigning positions to be filled, in accordance with gender equality through by executing the actions listed below.

Action 2.3.1.

Determine the gender parameters to be followed, disaggregate personnel data and collect and analyse them by gender, whilst taking into account the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Action 2.3.2

In this analysis, identify imbalances, examine their origins and formulate proposals to correct them. Furthermore, draw up conclusions and proposals and communicate them to the GM network of the Federal Science Policy. To this end, it is proposed that the GM working group meets annually with gender experts.

Action 2.3.3.

Annually disseminate internally and externally the conclusions of the Belnet gender equality analyses. The external dissemination is foreseen by integrating it in the annual report.

2.4 Training and capacity building

The implementation of measures to raise awareness on gender issues among Belnet staff and visitors is essential for understanding and correcting discrimination, stereotypes and other prejudices that may plague the working environment.

Belnet has created a **cosy meeting and rest area** where all staff members can meet and find out about events or activities related to gender equality.

Belnet participates in working groups around the inter-federal and inter-sectoral plan **'Women in Digital'**³ that was approved at the Council of Ministers of 5 March 2021.

The aim of this plan is to provide Belgium with a **coherent strategy** to promote coordination and synergy between the different initiatives taken to promote women in STEM/ICT at all policy levels in our country.

This strategy is based on the following five strategic objectives:

- Ensuring that more women graduate in the digital sector (ICT/STEM)
- Promoting the inclusion of women in the digital working world and/or sector
- Promoting the retention of women in the digital sector
- Creating new images
- Closing the gender gap in the specific target groups

Action 2.4.1.

Organise regular events, general or focused on specific staff categories or themes, to reinforce an open vision, free of clichés and stereotypes.

Action 2.4.2.

Encourage our staff to participate in initiatives such as Woman in Digital, and encourage them to share their knowledge with the rest of our staff afterwards.

Action 2.4.3.

Offer training to staff (including decision-makers) on the prevention of discrimination, gender equality and equal opportunities, and diversity. This is based, among other things, on the offer from [the federal training institute](#).

³ <https://news.belgium.be/nl/interfederaal-en-intersectoraal-plan-women-digital> (consulted on 9 February 2022).



3 Plan of action: content areas

In addition to the four mandatory requirements, four **content areas** that have been put forward by the European Commission are also discussed below. For each thematic area, the corresponding actions from Belnet can be found. The fifth thematic area "integrating the gender dimension in research and teaching content" is not applicable due to the nature of our activities and will therefore not be further elaborated in our GEP.

3.1 Work-life balance and organisational culture

The **work-life balance** is one of the most important pillars of Belnet's P&O policy. There are flexible working hours, teleworking is strongly accepted and a full-time employee receives at least 26 days of leave and compensation days between Christmas and New Year. Transparent and open communication and a family atmosphere are actively promoted by means of various fun events and drinks.

In addition, **disconnection** is an important factor in maintaining this work-life balance. That is why Belnet especially takes care of the application of art. 1 of the law of 22 July 1993 "houdende bepaalde maatregelen inzake ambtenarenzaken" (on certain measures regarding civil servants' affairs) that defines the "right to disconnect" and the circular of 20 December 2021 that specifies its application.

This legal framework always and everywhere applies the **principle of equality** and every employee, regardless of his or her gender, can invoke it. Belnet undertakes to disseminate this information to its employees.

Action 3.1.1.

Ensure the work-life balance of our employees through various prevention and well-being actions, as listed and prioritised in the annual action plan of our internal prevention advisor.

Action 3.1.2.

In the framework of the right of disconnection, establish and follow up a formal disconnection policy within Belnet.

Action 3.1.3.

In the interest of the work-life balance, we will in the future also make a transparent overview available via our intranet, where for both men and women is explained what in concrete terms needs to be done when one becomes a (foster) parent.

3.2 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Belnet should reflect on perceived imbalances in **managerial positions**. Similarly, when appointing managers and other positions, respecting a gender balance remains an issue of concern and special attention is paid to it.

Action 3.2.1.

Identify gender imbalances in decision-making positions, determine their origin and propose ways to correct them. The results of the analysis will be sent to the relevant supervisory authority (BELSPO, SELOR, etc.) so that they can make the changes that fall within their competence.



3.3 Gender equality in recruitment⁴, career progression and use of contractual employees

As for the previous two points, Belnet is bound by a legal framework.

The recruitment of administrative and technical staff at Belnet is performed by SELOR, in compliance with the language legislation, but also with their [gender policy](#), which is mentioned on the SELOR website and is integrated in their recruiting approach.

Belnet should strive for a gender balance among the members of the jury.

Action 3.3.1.

Belnet should strive for a gender balance among the members forming the juries in the selection of staff.

3.4 (Preventive) measures with regard to psychosocial risks

The thematic area "Measures against gender based violence, including sexual harassment" has been extended to "(Preventive) measures with regard to psychosocial risks", because we work in a preventive way as well as with follow-up actions and because we want to outline below the broader framework of our prevention, with focus on the aspect of gender.

With regard to the **prevention of psychosocial risks at work**, including violence, harassment or unwanted sexual conduct at work, the following legislations are applicable to Belnet:

- "The Law of 28 February 2014 supplementing the Law of 4 August 1996 on the well-being of employees in the performance of their work as regards the prevention of psychosocial risks at work, including in particular violence, harassment or unwanted sexual conduct at work";
- "The Royal Decree of 10 April 2014 on the prevention of psychosocial risks at work";
- "The Law of 28 March 2014 amending the Judicial Code" and the Law of 4 August 1996 on the welfare of employees in the performance of their work as regards judicial proceedings."

Action 3.4.1.

Belnet takes the necessary (preventive) measures to protect its employees against violence, harassment and unwanted sexual behaviour at work. Our employees can always turn to P&O, the internal or external prevention service or the confidential counsellors. Their contact details can be found on the [intranet](#).

The persons of trust have been trained in advance and also follow a compulsory annual "refresher course" in cooperation with Empreva⁵.

⁴ The term 'recruitment' corresponds to the entry into service in the contractual framework.

⁵ The persons of trust, training and further training are monitored (via P&O) by [EMPREVA](#), the central service of the Common Internal Service for Prevention and Protection at Work of the Belgian Federal Administration. EMPREVA's actions go beyond bullying and take into account the employee's well-being in a holistic way.

All work on psychosocial risks (including harassment) is subject to dual reporting, by the internal service for prevention and protection at work and by the external service for prevention and protection. The annual reports are publicly available. They contain general statistics on the cases handled by the trust persons.

In addition to EMPREVA, who are privileged partners, the participation of associations specialised in this field can be used to organise events or set up a prevention campaign.



Action 3.4.2.

Protection of pregnant women (protection from dismissal, possibility of contacting the occupational physician for reasonable adjustments within the job, first-aid room available for breastfeeding during the hours, adapted evacuation route via goods lift)

Action 3.4.3.

If our employees experience violence, harassment or unwelcome sexual conduct at work from a third party (e.g. customer, visitor, subcontractor, employee from an external company, etc.) they can report this in an anonymous register, "the register of third party facts", by informing a confidential advisor or the psychosocial risk prevention advisor.

The aim is to develop appropriate collective measures to reduce these third-party facts and protect the employees of the organisation.

Action 3.4.4.

Set up communication and awareness-raising campaigns on themes defined as priority actions by the internal prevention adviser.

Action 3.4.5.

Conducting surveys on mental well-being on a regular basis in order to keep a finger on the pulse of our employees and to take the necessary actions on that basis. This in cooperation with Empreva.



4 Formal approval

The Executive Committee of Belspo hereby declares its agreement with the content of the Gender Equality Plan of Belnet.

Arnaud Vajda (Chairman of the Executive Committee of Belspo)

(read & approved + signature)