

Gender Equality Plan

AQUA Legacy

Not-for-profit organisation

Website: www.aqualegacy.eu

Effective Date: April 2026

Revision Period: Annual review, full revision every 3 years

Approval: Board of Directors, March 13, 2026

1. Introduction and Commitment

AQUA Legacy is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to developing research, understanding, and promoting traditional and innovative climate adaptation technologies to protect tangible, intangible, and natural cultural heritage from water-extreme events. As an organization committed to excellence, sustainability, and social responsibility, we recognize that gender equality is fundamental to achieving our mission and fostering innovation in the water-climate-heritage nexus.

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) represents AQUA Legacy's formal commitment to promoting gender equality across all organizational activities, from governance and operations to research and stakeholder engagement. We acknowledge that diverse perspectives strengthen our capacity to address complex environmental and societal challenges, and that gender equality is essential for producing high-quality, impactful research and policy outcomes.

Our commitment:

- To create an inclusive organizational culture where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive and contribute fully
- To ensure gender balance in leadership, decision-making, and project participation
- To integrate gender dimensions into our research on water, climate, and cultural heritage
- To promote work-life balance and flexible working arrangements
- To maintain zero tolerance for gender-based violence, discrimination, and harassment

This GEP fulfills the eligibility requirements for participation in Horizon Europe and other EU-funded research and innovation programmes.

2. Organizational Context and Baseline Assessment

AQUA Legacy operates as a lean not-for-profit organization with a growing network of members, collaborators, and partners across Europe. Our work spans research, policy advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge dissemination at the intersection of water management, climate adaptation, and cultural heritage protection.

Current organizational composition (as of March 2026):

- Board of Directors: 3 members (gender composition to be documented annually)
- Core team members: 5 active members
- Extended network: Collaborators from research institutions, NGOs, and public bodies
- Project-based engagement: Variable based on funded initiatives

Baseline data collection:

AQUA Legacy commits to collecting and monitoring sex/gender-disaggregated data on:

- Board and governance body composition
- Core team and member composition
- Project leadership roles and research team composition
- Participation in events, workshops, and training activities
- Authorship on publications and policy briefs
- Speaking opportunities and external representation

Current strengths:

- Commitment to inclusive and collaborative research approaches
- Focus on community engagement and participatory methods
- International network spanning diverse geographic and institutional contexts

Areas for development:

- Formalization of gender equality monitoring systems
- Systematic integration of gender dimensions in research design
- Explicit training on gender equality and unconscious bias
- Development of work-life balance policies

3. Minimum Process-Related Requirements

3.1 Publication and Top Management Endorsement

This Gender Equality Plan is:

- Published on the AQUA Legacy website (www.aqualegacy.eu) under a dedicated "Governance Documents" section
- Signed and endorsed by the Board of Directors
- Communicated to all members, collaborators, and partners
- Referenced in grant applications and partnership agreements

3.2 Dedicated Resources and Expertise

AQUA Legacy commits the following resources to GEP implementation:

Human resources:

- Designation of a Gender Equality Officer (GEO) responsible for GEP oversight and implementation (role assigned to a Board member or senior team member)
- Involvement of all Board members in annual GEP review and monitoring
- Engagement of external gender expertise when needed (consultants, trainers, advisory support)

Financial resources:

- Annual budget allocation for gender equality training and awareness activities
- Resources for data collection, monitoring, and evaluation activities
- Budget for external expertise and capacity building
- Integration of gender equality considerations in all project budgets

Organizational resources:

- Quarterly Board meetings include GEP monitoring as standing agenda item
- Annual reporting on GEP implementation and indicators
- Access to gender equality networks, toolkits, and best practice resources

3.3 Data Collection and Monitoring

AQUA Legacy will collect and maintain sex/gender-disaggregated data on:

Category	Indicators
Governance	Board composition by gender, decision-making roles
Membership	Active members and collaborators by gender
Project roles	Project coordinators, PIs, team members by gender
Outputs	First/corresponding authors by gender, speaker slots
Training	Participation in gender equality training by gender
Recruitment	Applications received and selections by gender

Table 1: Gender-disaggregated data monitoring framework

Monitoring process:

- Data collected quarterly and reviewed at Board meetings
- Annual gender equality reporting integrated into organizational annual report
- Confidentiality and data protection maintained in accordance with GDPR
- Trend analysis and identification of imbalances or areas requiring corrective action

Reporting:

- Annual internal review of GEP implementation with quantitative and qualitative assessment
- Public reporting of key gender equality indicators on AQUA Legacy website
- Integration of gender equality outcomes in donor and funder reporting

3.4 Training and Awareness-Raising

AQUA Legacy commits to providing training and awareness-raising activities on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for:

Target groups:

- All Board members and decision-makers (mandatory annual participation)
- All staff, core team members, and active collaborators
- Project-based researchers and external partners involved in AQUA Legacy initiatives

Training content and delivery:

- Introduction to gender equality principles and EU gender equality policies
- Unconscious gender bias recognition and mitigation strategies
- Gender-sensitive research design and methodology
- Inclusive communication and stakeholder engagement
- Prevention of gender-based violence and harassment
- Work-life balance and organizational culture

Implementation approach:

- Minimum one training session annually for all staff and decision-makers (in-person or online)
- Onboarding training for new Board members, staff, and collaborators
- Integration of gender equality modules into project kick-off meetings
- Access to online resources, toolkits, and self-learning materials
- Participation in external gender equality networks and communities of practice

Documentation:

- Training attendance records maintained
 - Evaluation of training effectiveness through participant feedback
 - Continuous improvement based on lessons learned
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4. Thematic Areas: Concrete Measures and Targets

4.1 Work-Life Balance and Organizational Culture

Objectives:

- Foster an inclusive, respectful, and supportive organizational culture
- Enable flexible working arrangements that support work-life balance
- Promote equal opportunities regardless of caring responsibilities

Concrete measures:

- Flexible working hours and remote work options for all team members
- Meeting scheduling that accommodates different time zones and caring responsibilities (no meetings before 9:00 AM or after 5:00 PM CET when possible)
- Support for parental leave and return-to-work transitions (maintain involvement in decision-making during leave, flexible reintegration)
- Annual organizational culture survey including questions on work-life balance and inclusiveness
- Promotion of respectful communication and collaborative working methods

Targets (2026-2029):

- 100% of team members have access to flexible working arrangements by end of 2026
- Minimum 80% satisfaction rate on work-life balance indicators in annual survey by 2028
- Zero reported incidents of work-life balance-related discrimination or penalization

4.2 Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-Making

Objectives:

- Achieve balanced gender representation in governance and leadership roles
- Ensure inclusive decision-making processes
- Promote diverse leadership in projects and initiatives

Concrete measures:

- Target gender-balanced composition of Board of Directors (40-60% representation of each gender)
- Gender balance considerations in leadership selection for projects and working groups
- Rotation of leadership opportunities and visible roles (event chairing, spokesperson roles)
- Mentorship and leadership development opportunities for underrepresented genders
- Monitoring of speaking opportunities and external representation for gender balance

Targets (2026-2029):

- Achieve 40-60% gender balance in Board composition by 2027 (at next election cycle)
- Minimum 40% representation of each gender in project coordination roles by 2028
- Gender-balanced speaker representation at AQUA Legacy-organized events (50/50 target)
- Annual review of leadership opportunities with corrective actions if imbalances identified

4.3 Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression

Objectives:

- Ensure fair, transparent, and inclusive recruitment processes
- Provide equal opportunities for career development and advancement
- Eliminate gender bias in selection and progression decisions

Concrete measures:

- Gender-neutral job descriptions and calls for members/collaborators
- Diverse recruitment panels for key positions (minimum one woman, one man on selection committees)
- Active outreach to underrepresented gender candidates through diverse networks and channels
- Transparent criteria for selection, promotion, and leadership opportunities
- Equal access to professional development, training, and networking opportunities
- Regular review of recruitment outcomes for gender balance

Targets (2026-2029):

- Gender-balanced applicant pools for all open positions (minimum 40% each gender) by 2027
- Gender-balanced selection outcomes (within 10% deviation from applicant pool composition)

- 100% of recruitment processes use gender-sensitive job descriptions and diverse panels
- Annual reporting on recruitment and progression indicators with corrective actions as needed

4.4 Integration of Gender Dimension into Research and Policy Content

Objectives:

- Systematically integrate gender analysis into research on water, climate, and cultural heritage
- Recognize differential impacts of water-extreme events and climate change on different genders
- Promote gender-responsive policy recommendations and solutions

Concrete measures:

- Gender analysis included in all research project designs and proposals
- Consideration of gender-differentiated impacts in water-climate-heritage research (e.g., access to water resources, climate vulnerability, cultural practices, disaster preparedness and response)
- Collection of sex-disaggregated data in empirical research and stakeholder consultations
- Gender-sensitive stakeholder engagement ensuring participation of diverse voices
- Integration of gender dimensions in policy briefs, publications, and recommendations
- Capacity building for team members on gender-sensitive research methods
- Collaboration with gender experts and organizations when relevant

Examples of gender integration:

- Analyzing differential access to and control over water resources by gender
- Examining gender-specific knowledge and practices in traditional water management
- Assessing gendered vulnerabilities and resilience capacities in climate adaptation
- Ensuring gender-balanced participation in community consultations and co-design processes
- Highlighting women's roles in cultural heritage preservation and transmission

Targets (2026-2029):

- 100% of research projects include explicit gender analysis in design phase by 2027
- Minimum 50% of publications explicitly address gender dimensions or sex-disaggregated data
- Systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data in all stakeholder engagement activities

- Annual review and sharing of best practices in gender-responsive research within organization

4.5 Measures Against Gender-Based Violence, Including Sexual Harassment

Objectives:

- Maintain zero tolerance for gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination
- Provide safe reporting mechanisms and support for affected individuals
- Create awareness and prevention through training and clear policies

Concrete measures:

- Adoption of explicit Code of Conduct prohibiting all forms of gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination
- Clear reporting procedures with multiple reporting channels (designated contact persons, external helpline if appropriate)
- Confidential and impartial handling of complaints with protection against retaliation
- Support resources for affected individuals (counseling, legal advice, accommodation measures)
- Mandatory training on prevention of gender-based violence and harassment for all team members and decision-makers
- Regular communication of zero-tolerance policy and reporting mechanisms
- Safe space protocols for events, meetings, and fieldwork activities

Reporting and response procedures:

- Designated Gender Equality Officer or Board member serves as confidential first point of contact
- Option for external reporting if complainant prefers (partner organization or external service)
- Investigation process with qualified external support if needed
- Disciplinary measures proportionate to severity (warning, suspension, termination, legal action)
- Support and accommodation for affected individuals throughout process

Targets (2026-2029):

- Code of Conduct adopted and published on website by Q2 2026
- 100% of team members and collaborators informed of Code of Conduct and reporting mechanisms
- 100% participation in prevention training by all staff and decision-makers by end of 2026
- Zero tolerance policy visibly displayed at all events and communicated in partnership agreements

- Annual reporting on any incidents and responses (anonymized)
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5. Implementation, Monitoring, and Accountability

Responsibilities:

- **Board of Directors:** Overall strategic oversight, GEP approval, annual review, resource allocation
- **Gender Equality Officer/Coordinator:** Day-to-day implementation, data collection, training coordination, reporting
- **All team members:** Active participation in training, adherence to principles, contribution to inclusive culture

Implementation timeline:

- Q2 2026: GEP publication on website, designation of Gender Equality Officer, Code of Conduct adoption
- Q3 2026: First round of gender equality training for all team members and Board
- Q4 2026: Implementation of data collection systems and baseline indicator reporting
- 2027-2029: Ongoing implementation of measures, annual monitoring, continuous improvement

Monitoring and evaluation:

- Quarterly data collection and review at Board meetings
- Annual internal evaluation report with progress against targets and indicators
- Three-year external review and GEP revision (2029)
- Adaptive management approach: corrective actions implemented when targets not met

Communication and transparency:

- Public reporting of key indicators on AQUA Legacy website
 - Regular communication of GEP commitments to partners and collaborators
 - Integration of gender equality considerations in all external communications and funding applications
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6. Conclusion and Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Gender equality is integral to AQUA Legacy's values, mission, and vision for a sustainable and inclusive future. This Gender Equality Plan establishes clear commitments, concrete

measures, and accountable processes to advance gender equality across all dimensions of our work.

We recognize that gender equality is an ongoing journey requiring continuous learning, adaptation, and commitment. AQUA Legacy is dedicated to:

- Implementing this GEP fully and transparently
- Monitoring progress and addressing challenges proactively
- Engaging with gender equality networks and best practices
- Modeling gender equality leadership in the water-climate-heritage field
- Continuously improving our policies, practices, and culture

By advancing gender equality, we strengthen our organization's capacity to deliver innovative, impactful, and socially responsible research and solutions for protecting water resources and cultural heritage in a changing climate.

Approved by:

Board of Directors, AQUA Legacy

Date: March 13, 2026

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. J. [unclear]", written over a horizontal line.

[President/Board Chair Name]
President, AQUA Legacy