

# GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2024 - 2027



OIKON Ltd. – Institute of Applied Ecology

Zagreb, December 2024

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Oikon Ltd – Institute of Applied Ecology (hereinafter: Oikon) adopts a Gender Equality Plan (hereinafter: the Plan) for the period 2024–2027, with the aim of implementing measures and projects to enhance gender equality and to maintain and further advance the application of gender equality principles. These principles are rooted in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025. However, this Plan is tailored for a four-year period and will be aligned with the updated EU Gender Equality Strategy and other strategic documents in the coming years.

At Oikon, non-discriminatory interpersonal relations are a fundamental value. Oikon itself is an “idea,” and ideas come from minds—whether they are black, yellow, or white, female or male, bald or not. What matters most to us is the idea. Through our Equality Plan, we are implementing concrete measures to ensure equality, foster non-discriminatory collaboration, and promote the diversity of thought that drives innovation and progress.

# 2. ABOUT OIKON

Oikon is a leading licensed and accredited consulting company and research institute specializing in applied ecology in Croatia and the region. Founded in 1997 and based in Zagreb, Croatia, the company offers services in environmental and nature protection, natural resource management, environmental law, policy and economics, as well as sustainability and climate resilience.





Independently operated and privately owned, Oikon holds the official status of a scientific institute. In Croatia, it is licensed to operate in the fields of environmental and nature protection, geodesy, cultural heritage protection and conservation, and forest management planning. The company's **mission** is to design practical, pragmatic, feasible, and cost-effective development solutions that meet clients' needs while protecting the public interest. Oikon develops and maintains an excellent business and research system, enabling the creation of knowledge essential for environmental protection, sustainable natural resource management, and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. The **vision** is "Always one step ahead in the development of human society in harmony with nature".

In 2020, Oikon expanded its operations to Slovenia with the establishment of **OIKON SI, Institute for Sustainable Development Ltd.**, headquartered in Ljubljana. This strategic move enabled the company to offer a broader range of services and expertise in sustainable development, further solidifying its unique presence in the region. Shortly before the establishment of **OIKON MEA**, Oikon launched a new **Department for Sustainability and Climate Resilience**.

The department's mission is to equip companies with the expertise, professional rigor, and tools required to successfully navigate the complexities of sustainability and climate resilience. Additionally, its services address issues of gender equality as part of **reporting and preparing sustainability (ESG) reports** (CSRD/ESRS, including the transition from GRI to ESRS). The journey continued with the expansion of services to the Middle East and Africa region, culminating in the establishment of **OIKON MEA Ltd.**, with an office in Dubai, UAE. This office specializes in providing sustainable development services and environmentally friendly solutions, particularly in the field of renewable energy.

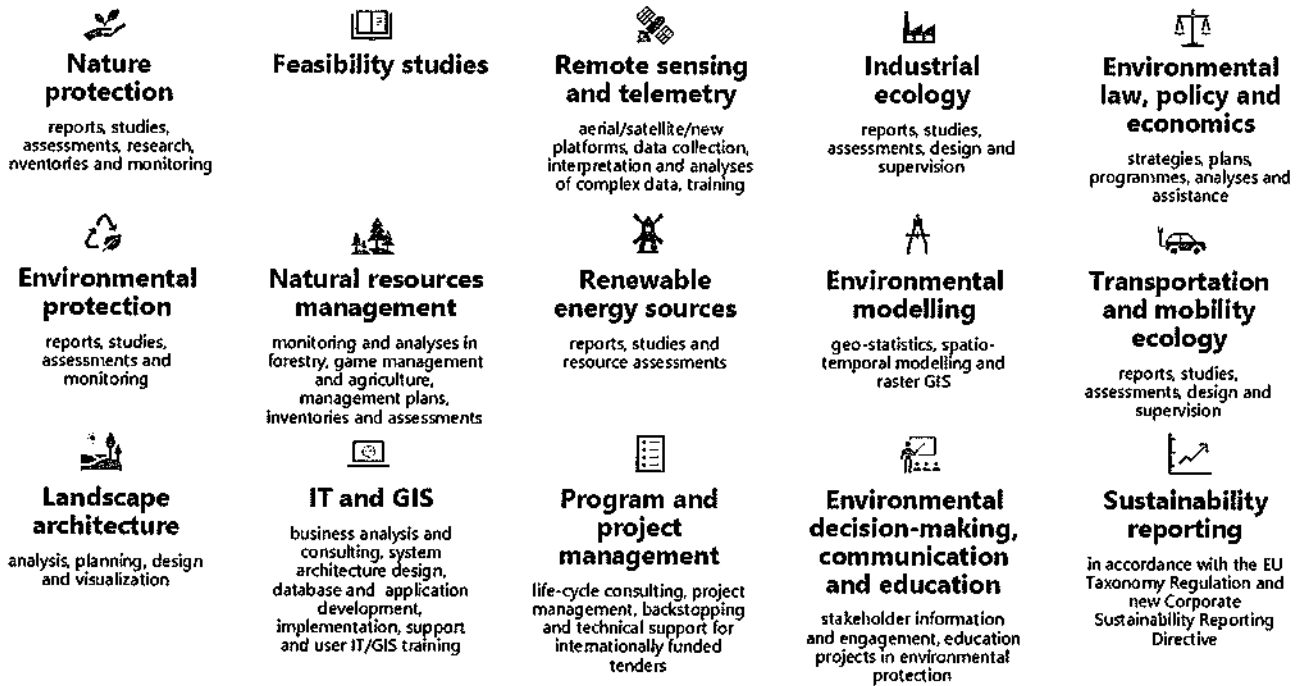
Oikon's commitment to ethical corporate management, continuous professional development of its talented staff, leadership, innovation, and a focus on quality and customer satisfaction has established its reputation for competence and reliability. The company operates on the foundation of an integrated management system that encompasses quality, environment, occupational health and safety, information technology, and information security, adhering to the highest international standards: **ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, ISO 45001:2018, ISO 27001:2013, and ISO 20000-1**.

Since 2020, Oikon has been a proud signatory of the **Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)**, reaffirming its dedication to promoting gender equality and empowering women across all aspects of its business. These principles, part of a global initiative led by the **UN Global Compact** and **UN Women**, serve as a framework for advancing the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Oikon's exceptional long-term business performance is further evidenced by its **Platinum AAA Creditworthiness Certificate**, signifying its status as a safe, reputable, successful, and highly desirable partner. In addition, Oikon holds numerous certificates of excellence and accolades and proudly carries the **Croatian Quality** label, reflecting its ongoing commitment to operational excellence and national recognition.

## 2.1. Oikon's services

Through its five departments, Oikon offers a wide range of services related to environmental and nature protection, as well as sustainable development. The main services include:



## 2.2. Organizational structure

Oikon successfully combines two worlds – business consulting and scientific research – in a constant pursuit of new knowledge applied in practice. The company's operations are structured into two primary segments: the **Consulting Division** and the **Scientific Division**, referred to as the **Institute**.

**Consulting Division** serves as Oikon's business arm, offering market-driven services across five departments:

- Department of Environmental Engineering and Landscape Architecture
- Department of Nature Conservation
- Department of Natural Resource Management
- Department of Environmental Law, Policy and Economics
- Department of Sustainability and Climate Resilience

Each department is led by a Head of Department, who reports to the Management Board. The board comprises the **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**, **Chief Operating Officer (COO)**, and **Chief Technology Officer (CTO)**. Currently, the COO also serves as the Head of Procurement, while the CTO simultaneously heads a department. This streamlined leadership structure ensures operational efficiency and accountability.

Representing Oikon's scientific arm, **the Institute** organizes and oversees all scientific activities. It is governed by the **Scientific Council** and the **Scientific Committee**:

- **Scientific Council:** Composed of eight members, the council serves as the Institute's governing body. It formulates policies and makes proposals that require approval from the Head of the Institute and Oikon's Management Board.
- **Scientific Committee:** Consisting of 20 members led by a President, the committee provides strategic guidance, fosters scientific development, and ensures the quality and integrity of the Institute's research.

**The Institute** includes five specialized laboratories, fostering both in-house and external scientific research:

- Remote Sensing and GIS Laboratory (LaDIGIS)
- Laboratory for Research and Monitoring of Large Carnivores and Vertebrate Ecology
- Laboratory for Fish and Aquatic Ecosystems
- Laboratory for Data Science
- Laboratory for Biodiversity and Population Genetics

Additionally, the Institute houses **UNIGIS Zagreb**, a university program offering internationally recognized postgraduate qualifications in Geoinformatics in partnership with the University of Salzburg, Austria. The heads of the laboratories are members of the Scientific Council and report to the Head of the Institute, ensuring cohesion between research activities and the Institute's strategic goals.

The company's operations are fully supported by the **Business Support Services Division**, which ensures smooth and efficient functioning across all departments. Key functions include:

- **Administration:** Managing daily tasks and internal processes to maintain organizational efficiency.
- **Accounting:** Overseeing financial activities such as payments, salaries, budgeting, and compliance with regulatory requirements.
- **Procurement Office:** Dedicated exclusively to managing tenders, ensuring competitive and compliant participation in work acquisition processes.
- **Public Relations and Marketing:** Shaping the company's public image, promoting services, and maintaining strong communication with clients and stakeholders.
- **Legal Services:** Ensuring compliance with legal regulations, managing contracts, and providing legal guidance.

By providing these comprehensive support services, the division allows the company's core teams to focus on delivering high-quality solutions in their respective specialties.



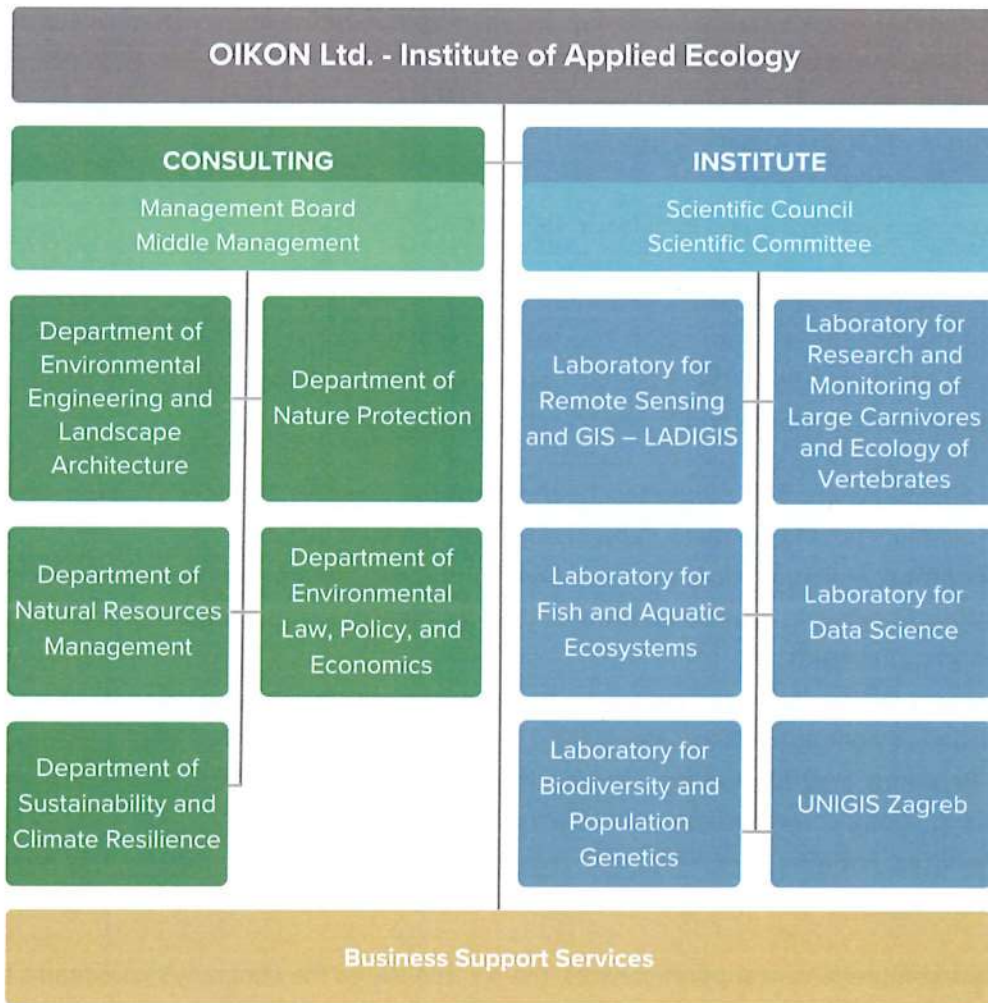


Figure 1: Organisational structure scheme of Oikon

### 3. GENDER EQUALITY REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette No. 56/90, 135/97, 08/98, 113/00, 124/00, 28/01, 41/01, 55/01, 76/10, 85/10, 05/14). In addition, the Anti-Discrimination Act (Official Gazette, No. 85/08, 112/12) provides for the protection and promotion of equality. Article 91 of the Labour Act (Official Gazette, No. 93/14, 127/17, 98/19, 151/22, 46/23, 64/23) stipulates equal pay for equal work or work of equal value.

Oikon has regulated the protection of employee dignity through its internal **Rules of work** (Pravilnik o radu). The regulation prohibits all forms of direct or indirect discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, family obligations, age, religion, political beliefs, social or economic status, disability, or any other discriminatory criteria.

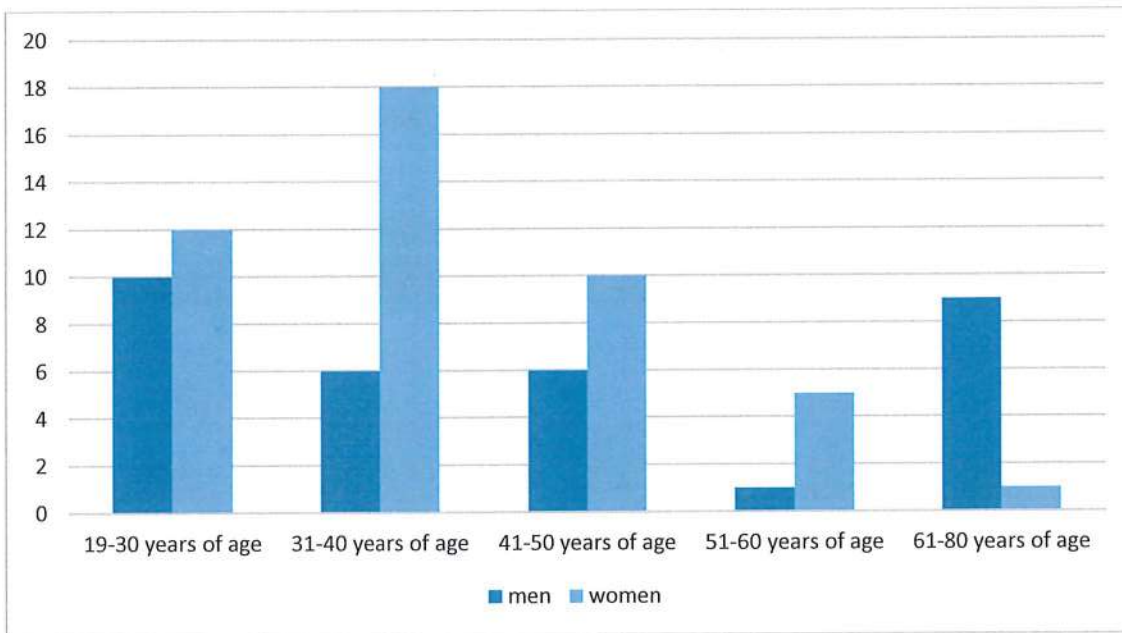
The Rules define harassment, including sexual harassment, as any unwelcome behaviour that violates an employee’s dignity or creates a hostile, humiliating, or offensive work environment. It applies to all employees and covers interactions with colleagues, supervisors, subordinates, and third parties. Preventive measures are outlined, and employees are expected to respect the dignity of others and act to prevent harassment within their capacity.

In cases of harassment, employees may file a written complaint with a designated officer or the employer. The complaint must be reviewed within eight days, and measures taken to prevent further harassment. Confidentiality is maintained throughout the process.

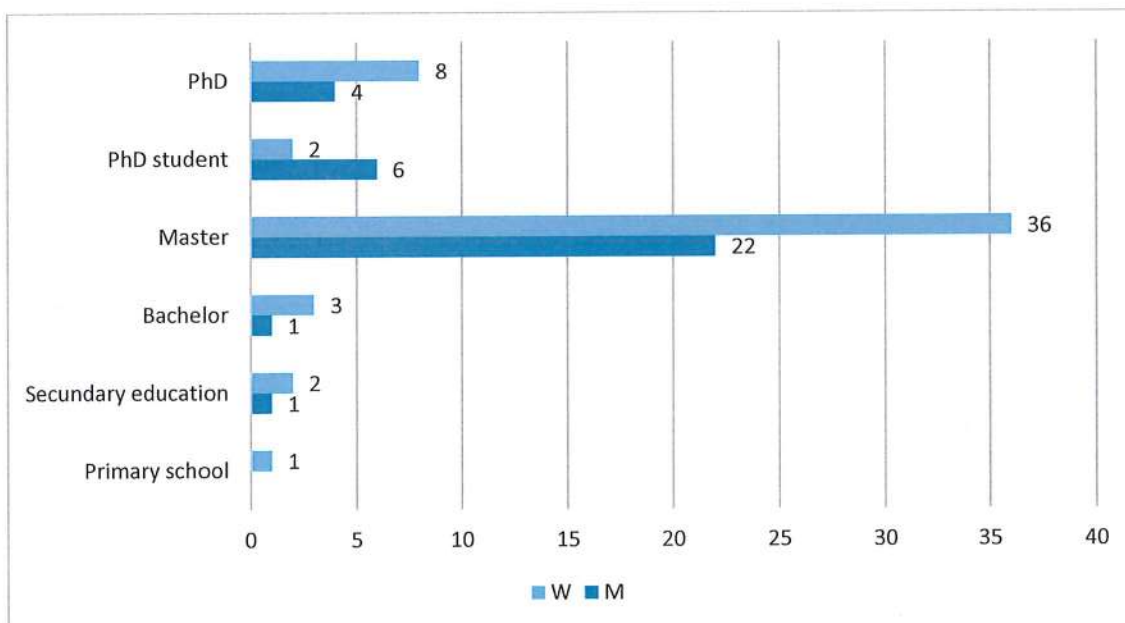
## 4. GENDER EQUALITY RELEVANT DATA

### 4.1. Gender distribution

Oikon currently employs 59% of women. On 1 June 2024, Oikon had 78 employees, thereof 32 are men and 46 are women. The following figures presents the gender distribution of Oikon’s employees by age and gender and by education.



**Figure 2:** Gender and age distribution of Oikon’s employees



**Figure 3:** Gender - women (W) and men (M) and education distribution of Oikon’s employees



Gender	2023.	% 2023.	2024.	% 2024.
<b>F</b>	10	66,67 %	4	57,14 %
<b>M</b>	5	33,33 %	3	42,86 %
<b>Total</b>	15	100 %	7	100 %

**Table 1:** Number of new employees at Oikon in 2023 and 2024

In 2023, Oikon hired 15 new employees, 10 of whom were women, and in 2024, 7 new employees, 4 of whom were women. All of these employees are still employed.

## 4.2. Gender pay

The table below shows a difference in the salaries of male and female employees at Oikon. When we look at the data for regular working hours, excluding factors like annual leave or sick leave, the difference was 11.20% in 2023 and 11.04% in the first eight months of 2024. It's important to note that these figures include the salaries of all employees, from interns to those in management roles.

Gender	Gross per hour 2023.	Gross per hour 2024. (01. – 08.2024.)	Gross per hour (08.2024.)
<b>M</b>	10,18	10,81	11,12
<b>F</b>	9,04	9,62	9,84
<b>Difference in salary</b>	11,20 %	11,04 %	11,51 %

**Table 2:** Pay gap between man and woman

## 4.3. Gender distribution among management

The management of Oikon values diverse perspectives and promotes the active participation of both female and male employees in decision-making processes. While the management board is currently composed of male members, the representation of women in leadership roles across other areas of the organization is significant. Oikon has four departments, three of which are headed by women, and five laboratories, two of which are led by women.

Governance Body	Total number of members	Number of women	% of women
<b>Assembly</b>	6	0	0 %
<b>Management Board</b>	3	0	0 %
<b>C-suite (Heads of Departments)<sup>1</sup></b>	4	3	67 %
<b>Laboratories</b>	5	2	40 %
<b>Scientific Council</b>	20	11	55 %

**Table 3:** Gender distribution between man and woman among management

<sup>1</sup> One Head of Department is also member of the Management Board



## 5. GENDER EQUALITY ACTIONS

### 5.1. Recruitment and career progression

Oikon ensures equal opportunities for all employees through transparent recruitment procedures based on objective criteria, without discrimination based on gender or age. The company offers equal pay for equally complex tasks and supports career advancement for all, regardless of gender. Additionally, Oikon actively supports the academic development of its employees by funding or facilitating their education. Currently, Oikon employs **8 doctoral students** (6 men and 2 women) and **12 holders of a PhD degree** (8 women and 4 men).

Careers at Oikon begin with the title **Associate – Intern**, where employees independently perform tasks or work under a mentor's guidance as part of their organizational unit. After one year, Associates – Interns advance to the role of **Expert Associate**, followed by **Senior Expert Associate**, based on experience and contributions. At each level, employees are responsible for tasks aligned with Oikon's organizational goals and **ISO Integrated Management System**, which includes annual personal development plans for all employees.

Employees across all roles contribute to projects, either as team members or in management roles, and participate in non-project activities under the supervision of their organizational unit head or the board. Leadership opportunities and responsibilities increase progressively, with Senior Expert Associates also coordinating teams and supervising staff when required.

### 5.2. Work-life balance

Oikon is deeply committed to supporting its employees in balancing their professional and personal lives, with sensitivity to the needs of parents—both men and women—enabling them to fulfil their parental responsibilities. The company has implemented internal mechanisms to assist employees who are parents of pre-school and lower primary school-aged children, as well as those with family members with special needs.

To support work-life balance, Oikon enables employees to work from home or another agreed location, either temporarily, permanently, or occasionally, depending on the employment contract. Employees working permanently from a separate workplace receive a flat-rate allowance for overhead costs, as per legal provisions. Occasional or regular remote work arrangements require prior approval, and employees remain obligated to attend the company premises when necessary. Oikon also minimizes atypical working hours, ensuring they are rare and carefully managed.

Maternity and parental leave are equally accessible to both men and women, with no restrictions on the duration of statutory entitlements. These rights apply across all areas of Oikon's operations, including its scientific and business activities.

By fostering a supportive environment for parents and employees with family responsibilities, Oikon demonstrates its commitment to inclusivity and flexibility, ensuring its team members can thrive both professionally and personally.

## 6. FUTURE GENDER EQUALITY ACTIONS 2024-2027

Oikon's **Gender Equality Plan (2024–2027)** outlines a comprehensive strategy to promote gender equality and inclusivity across all aspects of the organization. The plan identifies five key focus areas: **Gender Discrimination, Work-Life Balance, Evaluation and Monitoring, Education and Training, and Gender Dimension in Research and Business**. Each area is supported by specific actions and goals that will be

implemented incrementally from 2025 to 2027 to ensure continuous improvement. Below is a detailed breakdown of the planned initiatives.

	GENDER DISCRIMINATION	WORK – LIFE BALANCE	EVALUATION AND MONITORING	EDUCATION AND TRAINING	GENDER DIMENSION IN RESEARCH AND BUSINESS
2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a gender equality policy that clearly communicates the company's stance on preventing any form of gender inequality.</li> <li>• Conduct a survey on employees' perceptions of gender equality in the company to identify potential areas for improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct regular employee surveys to determine their satisfaction with measures such as remote working, flexible working hours and additional leave.</li> <li>• Organize workshops on stress management and balancing private and professional life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an initial system for tracking gender balance, using data on the representation of women and men in different positions and departments.</li> <li>• average size of grants to research projects conducted by men and women;</li> <li>• Report on gender equality issues as part of its annual sustainability reports, highlighting progress made and identifying areas for further improvement, with a focus on metrics relevant to the Gender Equality Plan (GEP).<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce mandatory gender equality education for all employees, focusing on creating an inclusive working environment.</li> <li>• Organize specific training on gender equality for management and scientific council, aiming to develop leadership skills that promote equality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate projects from a gender perspective to ensure equal opportunities for both genders in implementing key projects and decisions.</li> </ul>
2026.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop initiatives to strengthen inclusivity, focusing on gender equality in hiring, promotions and scientific development.</li> <li>• Evaluate employee perceptions of gender equality following the initiatives introduced in 2025.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce support programs for employees returning from parental leave to help them balance new family obligations with work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on gender equality issues as part of its annual sustainability reports, highlighting progress made and identifying areas for further improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize workshops on gender-sensitive communication and team collaboration.</li> <li>• Launch mentorship program for women to enhance their career advancement opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate gender perspectives into the planning of new projects to ensure equitable representation and participation.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> As a medium-sized enterprise, Oikon will report in accordance with the **VSME ESRS** once it is adopted by the European Commission.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain awareness of gender equality through regular campaigns and initiatives that promote inclusivity.</li> </ul> <p><b>2027.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly evaluate employee satisfaction with work-life balance policies and adjust based on feedback.</li> <li>• Develop new support programs for employees with family responsibilities, such as company-sponsored initiatives.</li> </ul>	<p>Report on gender equality issues as part of its annual sustainability reports, highlighting progress made and identifying areas for further improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer advanced training on leadership and mentorship with a focus on gender equality.</li> <li>• Conduct interactive workshops with practical examples to develop inclusive competencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully integrate gender perspectives into all business processes, including strategic decision-making and project planning.</li> <li>• Create a reward system to recognize teams that demonstrate outstanding results in promoting gender equality.</li> </ul>
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Table 4 – Gender equality Plan objectives by years

## 7. CONCLUSION

At Oikon, ideas are at the heart of everything we do—what matters most is the idea itself, regardless of who it comes from. This Gender Equality Plan is a step forward in strengthening our commitment to equality and diversity in everyday activities. Through this plan, we are implementing concrete measures to ensure equal opportunities, foster collaboration free from discrimination, and promote the diversity of thought that drives innovation and progress.

## 8. PUBLIC AVAILABILITY AND RESOURCE COMMITMENT

The equality Plan will be publicly available on Oikon’s official website and disseminated within the organisation. Adequate human and financial resources will be made available for the development, implementation and monitoring of the Gender Equality Plan.





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