

# **VIU GENDER EQUALITY PLAN**

## **2022**

## VIU GEP TEAM

The drafting and monitoring of the actions contained in the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) are entrusted to a dedicated working group – known as VIU GEP Team – made up of several people with specific and diverse skills in the field of gender and ethics issues, as identified to represent the main components of the Institution. The composition of VIU GEP Team reflects the strong connections and possible synergies with the VIU Ethics Committee.

<b>First and last name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Ilda Mannino	Representative of the Graduate Activities & Coordinator VIU GEP
Lucia Di Gioia	Representative of Research Programs & Vice coordinator GEP
Alessandra Fornetti	Representative of network and partnership & Vice coordinator GEP
Carmelo Marabello	Dean & Representative of the Governance
Sara De Vido	Representative of the Academic Council
Luca Pes	Representative of the Ethics Committee
Alessandro Spezzamonte	Representative of the Administration
Igor Folca Nash	Representative of the Conference Unit
Orla McLaughin	Representative of the Globalization Program
Francesca Scattolin	Representative of the Ageing Program

## PREAMBLE

A Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is a set of commitments and actions aimed at promoting gender equality within an organisation through institutional and cultural changes. GEPs originate from the European Commission's 2020-2025 Strategy for Gender Equality, in which measures to strengthen gender equality within Horizon Europe were announced.

The European Commission then introduced the obligation to have a GEP for all research organisations and higher education institutions as a requirement for accessing funding from the Horizon Europe research programme. The European Commission defines GEPs as strategic plans aimed at:

- conducting impact assessments on practices and procedures *to identify* gender bias;
- identifying and implementing innovative strategies *to correct* gender bias;
- defining targets and processes *to monitor* progress through specific indicators.

The GEP thus fits into the planning cycle of research institutions and is coordinated with other tools related to organisational wellbeing. It has also been mentioned in the NRRP guidelines as regards Mission 4 Component 2 (From research to enterprise): *'Access to funding from NRRP programmes is also allowed only to universities, research organisations and other public and private entities that have adopted, or commit to adopting in the first year of the project, a **'Gender Balance Sheet'** and a **'Gender Equality Plan'** similar to the GEP constituting a prerequisite for all Horizon Europe projects'*.

The adoption of a GEP is thus an essential requirement. It is not a merely formal step aimed at obtaining funds, but a set of objectives and actions aimed at developing an inclusive and gender-equal culture in the Institution.

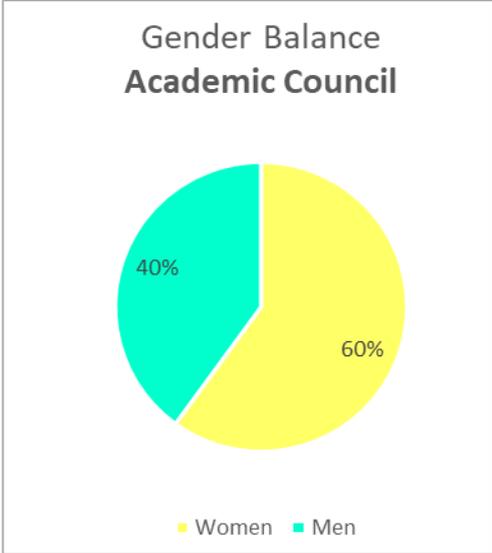
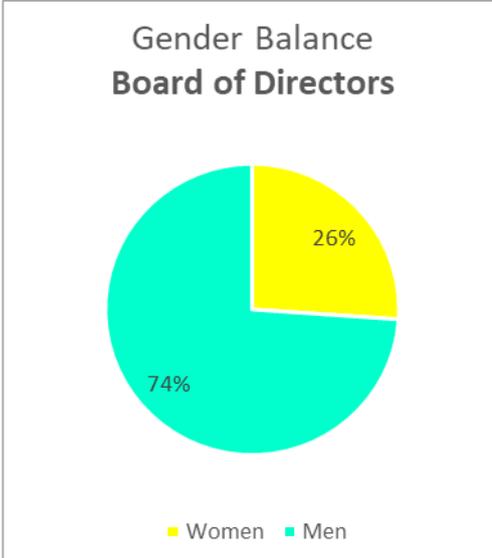
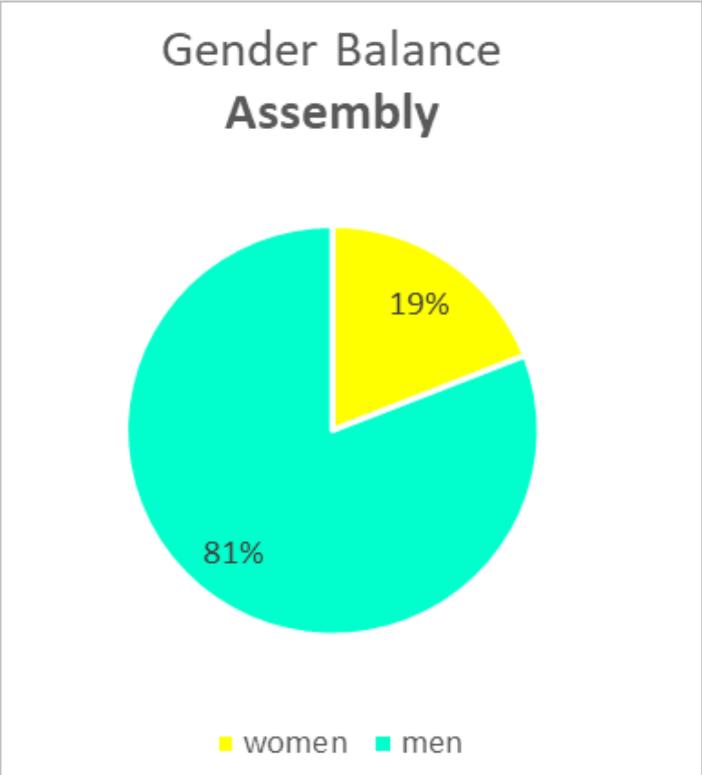
Gender equality is therefore a transversal enabling strategic factor that is perfectly in line with the Venice International University founding values. VIU is in fact an association of 20 universities from all around the world founded with the purpose of developing joint academic, research and capacity-building programs, across disciplines, continents, languages and cultures.

This is well represented by the code of ethics adopted by the Venice International University in 2014, that includes at art. 1 Rejection of all forms of unfair discrimination and at art. 2 Sexual abuse and harassment.

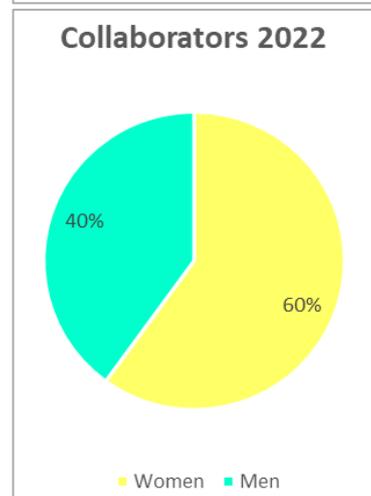
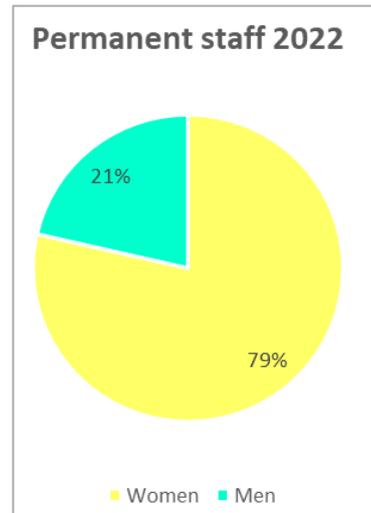
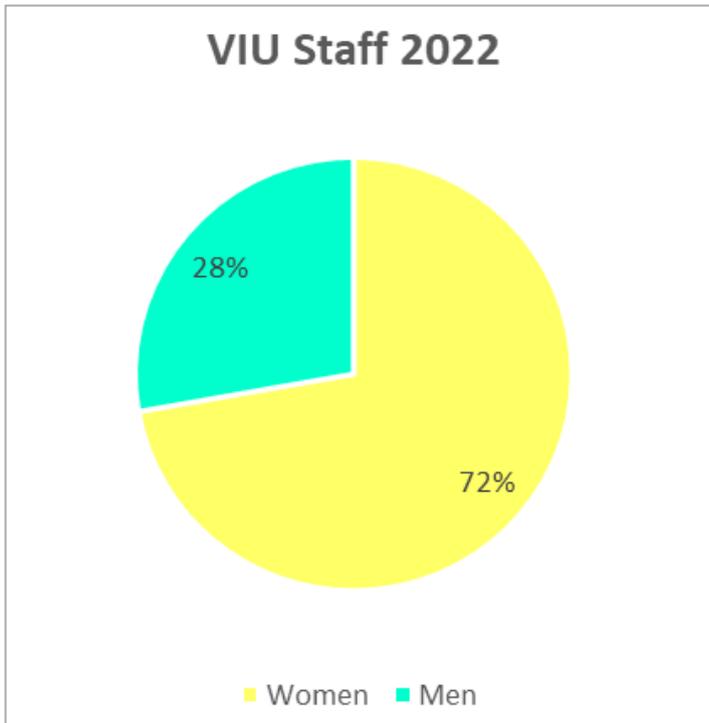
The gender equality plan of VIU starts from these considerations, taking also advantage of the regulatory analysis and methodology already used by its members to develop their GEPs as represented in the text.

# VIU GENDER BALANCE 2022

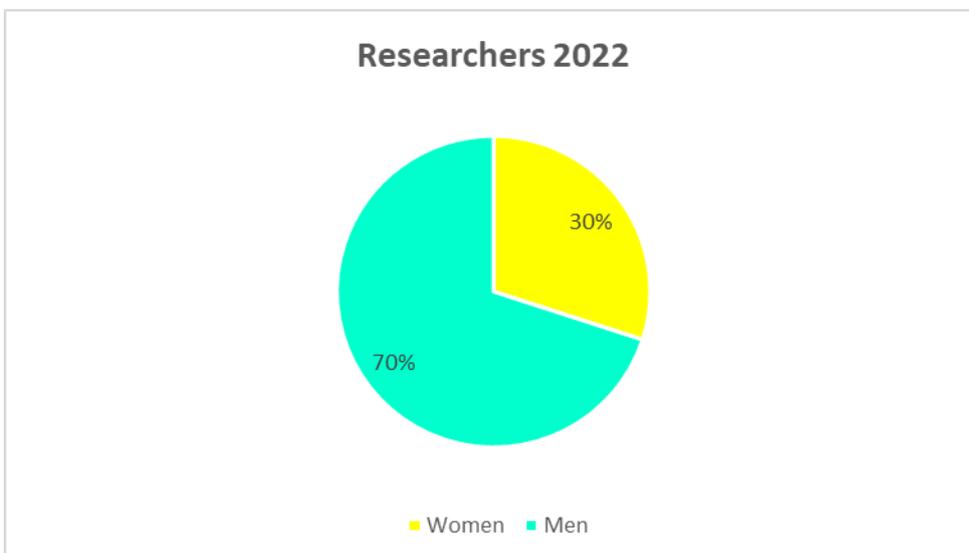
## VIU Governance



## VIU Staff

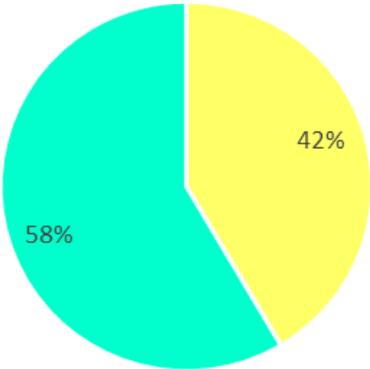


## VIU External Researchers Gender Balance



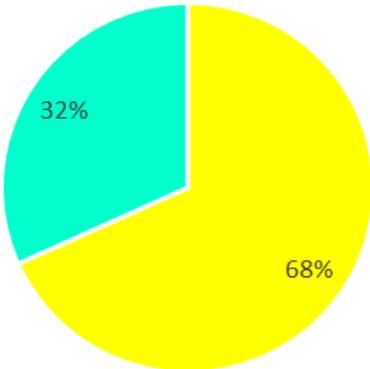
# VIU Globalization Program

GP Faculty AY 2021-22



■ Women ■ Men

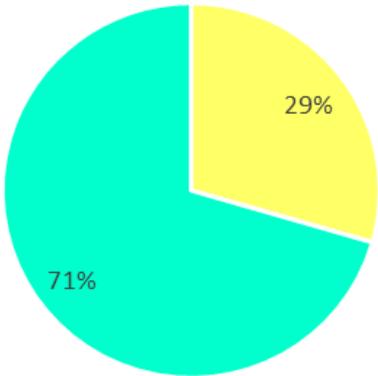
GP Students AY 2021-22



■ Women ■ Men

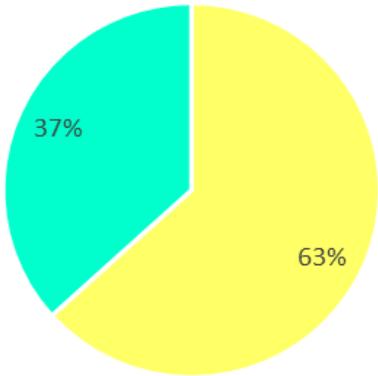
# VIU Intensive Graduate Activities

Graduate Faculty AY 2021-2022



■ Women ■ Men

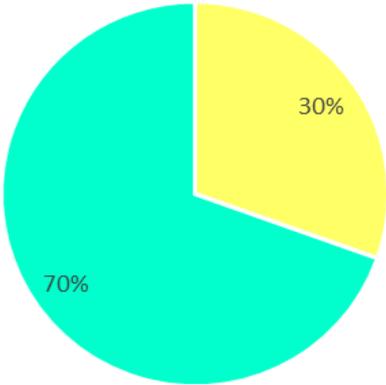
Graduate Participants AY 2021-2022



■ Women ■ Men

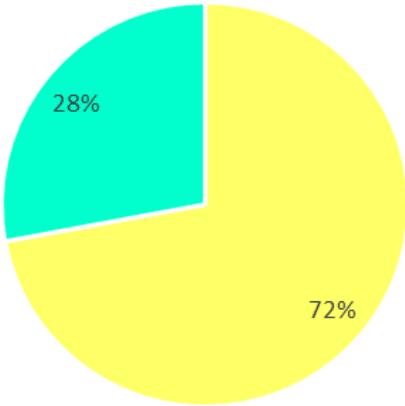
# VIU Europroject courses

**Europroject Instructors ay 2021-22**



■ Women ■ Men

**Europroject Participants ay 2021-22**



■ Women ■ Men

# INTRODUCTION

## Equality and non-discrimination

Gender equality is one of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda (No. 5), which has long inspired the actions of our Institution. Equality and non-discrimination are concepts that are often used interchangeably to express the positive and negative aspects of the same principle: on the one hand, equal treatment, and on the other, the prohibition of unjustified differential treatment based on certain characteristics such as gender. However, in recent years, the positive dimension of the term has been particularly accentuated, i.e., there is a negative obligation not to discriminate, but also an obligation to recognise differences and take positive action to achieve *de-facto* equality. In this sense, the prohibition of discrimination should be read in the light of the more limited concept of formal equality, while the term equality expresses the positive approach of substantive equality. Formal equality translates into equality before the law and the prohibition of direct discrimination, while the prohibition of indirect discrimination, which emphasises the removal of barriers that perpetuate entrenched structures of unequal access by virtue of belonging to a particular category or group, reflects the concept of substantive equality. In international human rights law, the right to equality and the principle of non-discrimination are recognised in multiple international and regional legal instruments: witness the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art. 2, 3 and 26), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art. 2(2) and 3), specific conventions relating to certain forms of discrimination (such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination), the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Art. 14 and Protocol No. 12), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Art. 20, 21(1), 23), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Art. 2, 3, 18(3)(4), 28), the American Convention on Human Rights (Art. 1 and 24), the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (Art. II), the Arab Charter on Human Rights (Art. 2, 9 and 35), and the ASEAN Declaration on Human Rights (Art. 1, 2, 3, 9). The 1979 UN Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) affirms the substantive equality of women in a legal instrument that is binding on ratifying states. At a European level, gender equality is both a value (Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union) and an objective of the Union (Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union). The Union's actions aim to "eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women" (Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).<sup>1</sup>

## Methodology

Achieving gender equality in education and research institutions does not mean trying to alter or violate existing legislation, nor does it mean creating 'fast lanes' for women, but rather putting in place actions necessary to achieve *de-facto* equality, thereby removing the obstacles (see, for example, the glass ceiling) that put women in an inferior position to men. Although the Gender Equality Plan working group has worked in this direction, it has broadly embraced an approach that is attentive to differences – not only between men and women – with the aim of laying the foundations for a more inclusive institution capable of recognising the impact of multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination that affect members of Venice International University community, in line also with VIU's mission. VIU also intends to include other personal characteristics or identities in gender issues and consider how these contribute to specific experiences of discrimination. The GEP is the result of a joint, careful and thoughtful work. The participatory process already

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<sup>1</sup> This part draws on the GEP elaborated by Ca' Foscari University of Venice, [https://www.unive.it/pag/fileadmin/user\\_upload/comunicazione/sostenibile/doc/Inclusione/Gender\\_Equality\\_Plan\\_CF\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.unive.it/pag/fileadmin/user_upload/comunicazione/sostenibile/doc/Inclusione/Gender_Equality_Plan_CF_ENG.pdf)

adopted in many VIU activities and the implementation of the GEP are significant aspects of a process that does not end with the work of the group in drafting the plan. In its final formulation, the GEP is a starting point for implementing inclusive actions in the years to come.

## **Existing initiatives**

Being a consortium of organizations from different countries, cultures and background, Venice International University has always been putting a great attention to inclusion. For years now, VIU has been developing projects and actions aimed at promoting gender equality and inclusivity both within its own organisation as well as among students, visiting professors and researchers.

In particular, we would like to mention the VIU's focus on work-life balance issues, which was put in place before the Covid pandemic and strengthened during it. Thanks to the introduction of activities such as telecommuting and smart working, VIU came to meet special needs of the staff with care duties or with family far from the work office.

Moreover, VIU introduced semestral courses on gender studies to raise awareness and attention on the issue and more recently covered this topic also in its graduate activities. Further, courses are offered by VIU on Intercultural Communication that through knowledge and understanding contribute to prevent discrimination.

At art. 2 of its code of ethics VIU reports also its position against Sexual abuse and harassment.

VIU is actively part in a number of international networks, both at international (UN Global Compact, UN SDSN – Sustainable Development Solutions Networks) and national level (ASVIS – Sustainable Development Italian Alliance, Global Compact Italian Foundation). Its attention and efforts are therefore put towards a number of SDGs that, directly or indirectly, supports SDG5 – Gender Equality, as for example SDG4 – Quality Education, SDG8 – Decent work and economic growth, SDG10 – Reduce Inequalities, SDG17 – Partnership for the Goals.

## **Verification and updating methods**

This document has a time horizon of three years, in line with the other monitoring and planning tools of VIU. Periodic surveys and continuous monitoring are planned for all VIU components and across VIU activities to assess the effectiveness of the actions implemented within the GEP. The GEP Team undertakes to submit to VIU governing bodies a report every three years on the progress of the GEP, whose data and information will serve as the basis for the review of the plan, code of ethics and all the other planning documents of the VIU, in order to align objectives and actions while considering the various context conditions and the needs and criticalities that might emerge.

## ACTION PLAN

The following six macro-areas have been identified:

1. Work-life balance (Reconciliation of work and study with care duties)
2. Organizational Culture
3. Gender in leadership and decision making
4. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
5. Integrating gender into research and teaching
6. Gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

For each macro area, objectives, actions and timing have been identified.

The actions address

- **Governance:** all governance bodies and roles;
- **VIU staff:** permanent staff and collaborators;
- **Professors:** professors and instructors involved in the Globalization Program and the Graduate Activities, and instructors of training;
- **Student component:** students of all levels, including masters, single courses, PhD, Erasmus, etc.;
- **Dissemination event's organizers:** all those involved in the organization and implementation of conferences, workshops, etc. organised at VIU.

## 1. Work-life balance

Ensuring work-life balance for parents, carers, commuters means helping workers to reconcile work and private life by promoting flexible workload management.

VIU has promoted this attitude since long time, issuing part time contracts and smart working for commuters and carers.

With the following actions VIU will continue in this direction.

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
1.1 Further supporting care and work-life balance	Develop strategies for accommodating flexible and distance work for staff commuting and/or with care responsibilities and/or family constrains	X		
	Organise meetings with flexible schedules taking into account care needs or giving the possibility to attend remotely	X	X	X
	Continue favouring professors to bring family from abroad when participating in the VIU teaching semester	X	X	X
1.2 Improve communication of VIU's commitment to be family-friendly work, research and study place	Make VIU's commitment more explicit in on-boarding materials	X		
	Make VIU's commitment more explicit in recruitment processes	X		
	Review website information on available forms of support (for employees and for students)	X		

## 2. Gender Equality Organisational culture and institutional structures

Promoting in VIU a culture of gender equality between women and men in all their diversity means encouraging gender inclusion and equality in VIU's actions and raising awareness among the entire VIU community. The organisation of VIU is by nature inclusive, gender-sensitive, culturally-sensitive, given its multicultural foundation. However, social mechanisms can lead to inequality that is revealed, for example, in gender imbalances in some cases. If there is already a high attention on this aspect for workshops/symposia and other educational and dissemination events organised by VIU, further actions can be done to raise awareness on the issue of external organisers of events hosted at the VIU's premises.

The actions included in this area are therefore transversal to the VIU community and are aimed at encouraging a wide cultural change.

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
2.1 Making the language of the University more inclusive	Revision of the VIU code of ethics to include an article on the use of hate language	X		
	Revision of the University website, institutional documents and forms to ensure that language is inclusive and referring to the VIU GEP		X	
	Revision of the registration and application forms for VIU activities to offer more inclusive options for gender field (e.g. Female/Male/Non-Binary/Other/Prefer not to say...)	X		

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
2.2 Developing actions to promote inclusive culture within the University's practices	Survey of students and professors on the perception of inequalities within VIU		X	
	Survey of inclusion and diversity policies of the member universities in order to develop a tool-kit of best practices		X	X
	Organising open discussions with students, professors and staff on gender equality and inclusiveness		X	
	Organising talks with female professionals, researchers, scientists and academics whose professional history inspires study and career choices and a greater awareness of women's roles		X	
2.3 Overcoming gender asymmetry in the dissemination activities hosted at VIU	Mapping of panel composition at conferences hosted and organised at VIU	X	X	X
	Including promotion of gender balance in the guidelines provided to the event organisers	X		
2.4 Consolidate institutional structures for Gender Equality	Make the position of Gender Equality Officer at VIU permanent and explicit	X		
	Make Gender Equality an explicit part of VIU's mission			X
2.5 Establish regular monitoring and planning	Monitor gender balance yearly	X	X	X
	Produce Gender balance every (academic) year	X	X	X
	Design and implement Gender Equality Plans every three years	X	X	X

### 3. Gender balance in top positions and decision-making bodies

Gender balance in top positions and decision-making bodies should be ensured both in terms of quantitative balance and in terms of equal opportunities and ethical equality.

Being an association, the VIU governing bodies are meant to represent the different members. They are composed of:

- an Assembly where the Heads (i.e. rectors/presidents) of the member universities are present. These appointments are beyond the control of VIU since they are made by the Countries where the member institutions have their seat;
- a Board of Directors and an Academic Council, both composed of representatives indicated directly by the Assembly;
- the VIU President, the VIU Vice President and the VIU Dean, who are elected by the Assembly.

Since the appointments of the members of the Board, the Academic Council, the Dean, the Vice President and the President are made by the Association itself, it should be possible to encourage the appointment of these representatives following the criterion of gender balance.

The current numbers show that, except for the Academic Council, where the 53% are women, there is still an imbalance between men and women. The proposed actions aim at tackling this state of affairs.

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
3.1 Achieve gender balance in VIU leadership	Ensure gender balance in the voted bodies/roles			X
	Appoint leadership paying close attention to gender equality			X
3.2 Mainstream gender in decision-making processes	Mainstream gender in all academic and administrative decision-making processes	X	X	X

#### 4. Gender equality in recruitment

VIU is a small and quite horizontal organization, with a limited staff and any career advancement foreseen, but involving professors and scholars from the member institutions in its academic activities and external experts and researchers in its research projects and dissemination activities.

Therefore, the actions presented are aimed at taking the necessary steps to further promote gender equality in recruitment and in the choice of scholars and experts to contribute to all its activities (Globalization Program, Graduate activities, Europroject, Thematic Programs, research projects, conferences).

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
4.1 Promoting gender equality in recruitment	Collect and monitor the gender of applicants for jobs in a digitalized, anonymous manner	X	X	X
	Develop and adopt gender-sensitive recruitment guidelines	X		
	Starting from the existing ones, build a database of female experts on VIU focus areas, to be involved in research projects and dissemination events	X	X	X

## 5. Gender mainstreaming in research and teaching programmes

The gender dimension is present in many of VIU academic offerings. VIU include gender studies among the courses offered on a stable basis in the Globalization Program and cover the topic also in the VIU Graduate Activities and in several seminars. Further efforts can be done for promoting greater visibility of gender issues and integration thereof in research programmes. The actions presented aim at filling this gap.

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
5.1 Strengthening research on gender and diversity issues	Monitoring VIU research on gender	X	X	X
	Work with the VIU programs to improve gender dimension in research	X	X	X
	Develop a network of experts in gender studies within and beyond the VIU association	X	X	X
	Organise dissemination events on the results of research projects on gender and diversity issues	X	X	X

## 6. Combating gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

Gender-based violence is structural in societies and disproportionately affects women and girls. It is a form of discrimination against women and a violation of fundamental human rights. Sexual harassment is a form of gender-based violence and consists of any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when such conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment (Istanbul Convention, Art. 40). VIU has already included at art. 2 of its code of ethics Sexual abuse and harassment that aims at preventing it.

The actions included in this area are aimed at responding to any instance of gender-based at VIU, but also at preventing violence by raising the awareness of the whole VIU community and changing a culture of discrimination and exclusion.

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
6.1. Establishing procedures for efficient complaint mechanism	Appoint the ethics code representative of the role of gender	X		
	Establish a devoted email and an anonymous form to report about case of violence and harassment	X		
	Establish a procedure to report in case of violence or harassment	X		
	Set up a centralized digital recording system for complaints	X		
	Continuous monitoring of data on gender-based violence at VIU	X	X	X

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
6.2 Raise awareness about sexual harassment	Incorporate info on VIU Harassment policy in all on-boarding guidelines (students and employees, interns, visiting professors)		X	
	Disseminate through the VIU website VIU procedures to respond to any instance of gender-based violence and discrimination	X	X	X