

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

2022-2026



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ABBREVIATIONS

CWL - Center for Women's Leadership

EB - Editorial Board

EIGE - European Institute for Gender Equality

EM - Editorial Management

GE - Gender Equality

GBG - Gender Balance Group

GEP - Gender Equality Plan

IBS - International Business School

MLSP - Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

RPO - Research Performing Organisations

WORD FROM THE RECTOR

It is understandable that we all live in a critical existential situation, in which our certainties and surroundings are not what they used to be. It is becoming increasingly clear that changes will be radical and consistent, unpredictable and not so often desirable. Nevertheless, our greatest hopes are in education and science, and in the belief that the collective human reason, guided by universal values and ideas will eventually meet and overcome the persistent challenges of time.

Our answer to these challenges is to continue to do what we have done so far, what we love and what gives meaning to our existence, to continue developing our vision for a better and equal gender representation and create an inclusive, discrimination-free community, while facing all the incoming challenges with dignity and determination. IBS's Gender Equality Plan is just one step in our efforts of fighting gender inequalities in the Bulgarian context, but also a stepping stone allowing us to move forward to achieve a consistent structural change.

Our mission as a university is to be socially responsible with progressive thinking meeting the international standards and requirements. We fully commit to ensure support and favorable environment for the implementation of the GEP, and be persistent in our efforts to improve ourselves and meet the necessary national and international demands.

As an educational institution we feel responsible in guiding our students towards the reality of life and shaping their attitudes and philosophy. We believe that this guidance should be towards uniqueness, individuality, awareness and equality, affirming a worldview free from the lenses of stereotypes and biases.

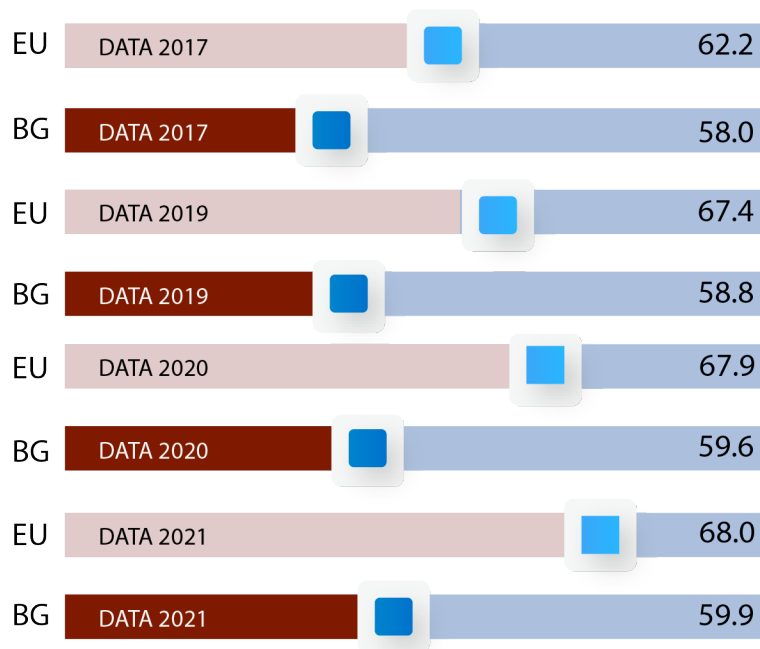
We will remain open and critical, ready to improve and firm in making an impact. With the development and implementation of the GEP at IBS, we strive to present our vision and future efforts towards achieving gender equal community.

On December 30, 2021 Bulgaria officially adopted the **National Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men 2021-2030**¹⁾ prepared by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP).

In addition, to the Strategy a **National Action Plan for Equality Between Women and Men 2021-2022**²⁾ was adopted. The **Strategy and Plan** consists of five major priority areas:

1. Equality of women and men in the labor market and equal degree of economic independence.
2. Reduction of the gender differences in pay and income.
3. Promoting equality of women and men in decision-making processes.
4. Combating violence and protecting and supporting victims.
5. Overcoming gender stereotypes in various spheres of public life and sexism.

GENDER EQUALITY INDEX - BULGARIA AND EU AVERAGE. INDEX /OUT OF 100/



Bulgaria's place 2017-2021

2017	16
2019	19
2020	19
2021	18

“With 59.9 out of 100 points, Bulgaria ranks 18th in the EU on the Gender Equality Index. Its score is 8.1 points below the EU’s score. Since 2010, Bulgaria’s score has increased by 4.9 points and its ranking has dropped by two places. Since 2018, Bulgaria’s score has increased by 0.3 points, mainly driven by improvements in the domain of money. Its ranking stayed the same.”³⁾

1. Bulgarian National Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men 2021-2030. Available at: https://saveti.government.bg/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=10726&folderId=971655&name=DLFE-9585.pdf

2. National Action Plan for Equality Between Women and Men 2021-2022. Available at: <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/uploads/41/test/plan2021-2022.pdf>

3. Gender Equality Index. Factsheet 2021. EIGE. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/country/BG>



A graphic of the year '2021' where the '0' is on a red background and the other digits are on a black background.

The International Business School (IBS) presently offers 12 Bachelor's, 18 Master's and 3 PhD study programmes in full-time, part-time and distance mode of teaching and learning. Around 3 000 students are pursuing degrees at the university. They are based in 2 campuses situated in Sofia and Botevgrad (a town close to the capital). Over 20 000 people have graduated since the establishment of the School in 1991. In 2021 IBS celebrated its 30th anniversary.

A graphic of the year '1991' where the '9' is on a red background and the other digits are on a black background.

IBS was established in 1991 as Bulgarian-Danish College of Trade, Export and Marketing located in the town of Botevgrad. In 1997 the College was incorporated into the structure of the Academy of Economics “D. S. Tsenov” in Svishtov. Three years later it was re-established as independent College of Economics and Business Administration.

A graphic of the year '2002' where the '0' is on a red background and the other digits are on a black background.

On 25 July 2002, with an act of the 39th National Assembly of Republic of Bulgaria, it was transformed into a specialised higher school of learning - International Business School. It was accredited by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency for degree programmes at Bachelor's, Master's and Doctor's level.

A graphic of the year '2017' where the '0' is on a red background and the other digits are on a black background.

In 2017 it was awarded “Building of the Year” in the category for Educational Building Architecture & Design in a nationwide competition. The Aula and all the classrooms at the new premises are equipped with diverse high quality educational appliances – most modern multimedia systems, scratchboards, etc.

A graphic of the year '2018' where the '0' is on a red background and the other digits are on a black background.

In 2018 IBS was awarded Turnitin's Global Innovation Award “Excellence in Academic Integrity”. The award recognizes institutions and educators who provide authentic learning, enhance assessment practices, help students to achieve learning objectives, and support institutional strategy.

IBS's **Strategy for Development 2030**¹⁾ includes six concrete strategic goals aiming at active participation in European initiatives; implementation of innovative practices in education, ensuring internal coherence and continuity regarding the training; creating opportunities for professional development and creating loyal society of graduates; training's internationalization through the development of national and international networks with leading academic and business institutions; establishment and development of IBS as an recognizable international center for business training and qualification, in accordance with the requirements of the national and European labor market.

IBS's vision holds on five indispensable values – People, Relevance, Innovation, Quality, and Society. These values determine our responsibility, commitment, and dynamic at all times. The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) aims at establishing a gender-equal framework for inclusive growth, prosperity, and research integrity. Establishing the core principles of GE can be seen as a firm step towards prosperity in all levels of development. It can be directly related to the five core values held by IBS.

People and Society:

Gender Equality (GE) is a fundamental human right; achieving GE creates equal opportunities and fairness. It aims to recognize and overcome the gaps in which women or men are underrepresented. Establishing GE-related policies also serves to empower women and eliminate discrimination against women and girls. These agendas correlate to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Goal 5. “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”²⁾. IBS endeavors to advance in our way of thinking and social responsibility as a school providing equal opportunities. GE directly intersects with ethnical and socioeconomic agendas, and thus the implementation of the GEP aims at reducing societal inequalities at the organization.

Relevance:

IBS strives to be adequate to vigorously changing regional, national and international economic environment employing modern methods and technologies of teaching and scientific research. This directly includes recognizing and presupposing gender aspects to all these environments.

Innovation and Quality:

IBS's GEP elaboration is also driven by the 2021 European Research Area's (ERA) pact for research and innovation and its core upholding values³⁾. The IBS GEP makes a priority out of research and innovations and aims at introducing and implementing norm-critical innovation as introduced in the Gendered Innovations 2, Policy Review. The norm-critical or intersectional analysis opens a new door in achieving excellence in research by questioning “norms, roles, power relations and power structures that can be linked to different kinds of discrimination, and reveals who or what is or are included or excluded by implementing various norms”⁴⁾ (p. 236). The latter directly reflects on the quality of the research and it broadens the investigated topics.

1. IBS Strategy for Development 2030. Available at: https://ibsedu.bg/media/AboutUs/01.188_Strategy_IBS_2030.pdf

2. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

3. European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, The new European Research Area, Publications Office, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/2736>

4. European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Gendered innovations 2: how inclusive analysis contributes to research and innovation: policy review, Publications Office, 2020, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/53572>

IBS's GEP targets the following areas of intervention:

1. Organizational culture and Work-life balance
2. Gender balance in Leadership and Decision-making Bodies
3. Gender balanced Recruitment, Selection and Career progression
4. Gender Equality in Research and Education

Audit and Planning phases.

IBS's GEP aims to benefit the organization and create a sustainable model of promoting gender inclusivity and diversity in the institution. The GEP was created by following the necessary steps to ensure its implementation. Based on **audit and planning phases** IBS's GEP team recognized specific areas of intervention and created a roadmap of context-based objectives and specific measures.

The **first area** of intervention concerns gender equality in organizational culture and work-life balance and highlights gendered stereotypes and resistance towards organizational change. In order to achieve that IBS introduces GE in different policies and ensures their implementation in the organization.

The **second area** concerns with gender balance in leadership and decision-making bodies and highlights the equal participation of women and men in decision-making to ensure fairness and transparency.

The **third area** deals with gender balance in recruitment, selection processes and career progression.

The **fourth and last area** concerns with integrating gender dimension in research and educational processes.

The IBS's GEP team recognizes that the GEP is "an ongoing process for improving gender equality"¹⁾ and with the help of the top management it aims at strengthening GE structures and provide a cohesive gender equal environment, assuring consistency in providing equal representation for all the staff members.

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation phases.

The Center for Women's Leadership is responsible for the GEP's implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The leading transformative approach will be gender mainstreaming as a tool to promote GE at all levels. During the three phases CWL will engage in: setting up working groups responsible for developing new GE policies and procedures, organizing awareness raising and training activities in order to achieve build capacity and support for the GEP's implementation, spreading GEP's agendas to achieve visibility. The CWL is also responsible for regularly assessing the progress of achieving the objectives and measures and constantly reviewing new findings and policies in order to improve the GEP.

"An effective GEP should be founded on a model of change that identifies the problems it seeks to address, their causes and desired outcomes, including targets, it should detail the set of activities that are required to achieve the aims, and indicators to monitor progress. A GEP should engage the whole organisation, from senior leaders to staff, students (in the case of a teaching organisation) and stakeholders, and it should form ongoing process that encourages self-reflection and review of processes and practices."¹⁾ (p. 7)

AREA 1. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

OBJECTIVE 1.

Awareness raising and promoting GE and diversity

MEASURES

- 1.1. Promoting the Center for Women's Leadership as a leading unit responsible for GE work by organizing campaigns to attract members, internal and external stakeholders, activities and interventions aiming internalization of the desired change in values and attitudes.
- 1.2. Establishing a Gender Balance Group under CWL that is mandated to support structural change towards gender equality and to promote gender equality change for a better, balanced and inclusive working environment through its work.
- 1.3. Organizing awareness-raising seminars and stimulating sensitivity to issues related to gender equality.
- 1.4. Organizing gender equality competence development trainings/ interactive workshops in small groups.
- 1.5. Capacity building through networking.

INDICATORS

- 1.1. CWL's annual activities report; Number of: campaigns conducted, members and stakeholders, implemented activities and initiatives; Analyzes and results of conducted surveys assessing perceptions, beliefs, or attitudes, and how these change.
- 1.2. CWL's annual activities report; Analyzes and results of conducted surveys on organizational culture and climate.
- 1.3. Number of: awareness-raising seminars conducted, participants in awareness-raising seminars; Analyzes and results of conducted surveys assessing the sensitivity to issues related to gender equality.
- 1.4. Number of: trainings/ interactive workshops conducted, participants in trainings/ interactive workshops, Analyzes and results of conducted surveys assessing gender equality competence.
- 1.5. Created sustainable Bulgarian GE network; Number of participants, Conducted meetings and activities. CoP's Sustainability Plan/Evaluation Plan.

DIRECT/INDIRECT TARGETS

- ▶ People in leadership positions
- ▶ Academic staff
- ▶ Administrative staff
- ▶ Students and PhD Students
- ▶ Internal and external stakeholders
- ▶ Successful women entrepreneurs
- ▶ Representatives of business and industry
- ▶ Policy makers in Bulgaria
- ▶ HR specialists
- ▶ Research Performing Organisations (RPO)

RESPONSIBLE BODIES

- ▶ Rector
- ▶ CWL/GEP Team
- ▶ GBG

SDG'S AGENDA:



AREA 1. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

OBJECTIVE 2.

Formation of a gender sensitive organizational culture

MEASURES

- 2.1. Ensuring a respectful, gender sensitive and welcoming meeting culture that does not consider 'women' and 'men' as homogeneous groups.
- 2.2. Developing internal rules for organizing and conducting working meetings and meetings of the governing bodies.
- 2.3. Organizing trainings to promote gender-sensitive communication and developing skills to use a gender-neutral language.
- 2.4. Conducting continuous oversight on documents (internal regulations, training documentation, etc.) and the information published regularly on the website for unconscious gender-biased language.

INDICATORS

- 2.1. Analyzes and results of conducted surveys for changes in the meeting culture.
- 2.2. Developed internal rules; level of familiarity and improvement of the internal rules from the staff.
- 2.3. CWL's annual activities report; Number of trainings and participants. Results of conducted formal and informal interviews on the extent of using gender sensitive language.
- 2.4. Usage of gender sensitive language in institutional documents and on the website.

DIRECT/INDIRECT TARGETS

- ▶ People in leadership positions
- ▶ Chairs of Councils
- ▶ Academic staff
- ▶ Administrative staff

RESPONSIBLE BODIES

- ▶ Rector
- ▶ Vice-Rectors
- ▶ Dean
- ▶ CWL/GEP Team

SDG'S AGENDA:



AREA 1. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE

OBJECTIVE 3.

Promoting and ensuring work-life balance

MEASURES

- 3.1. Developing internal rules and conditions (in accordance with the Labor Code of the Republic of Bulgaria) for providing opportunities for flexible working hours tailored to specific needs as well as to limit overtime.
- 3.2. Developing an indicative preliminary annual plan for vacation and holidays, consistent with both individual needs and the work schedule of the IBS.
- 3.3. Developing a schedule of planned working meetings (Academic Council, Academic-Scientific Council, etc.), in which the fixed start and end of the meetings should be within the working hours and at a time convenient for all members.
- 3.4. Organizing workshops to enhance work-life balance including to stimulate teamwork and shared responsibility, to share experience and to promote the concept of work-life balance as a field of research among academics, PhD students and students, to make a checklists for developing work-life balance provisions.

INDICATORS

- 3.1. Developed internal rules; level of familiarity of the internal rules from the staff and number of beneficiaries of the opportunities. Results of an overtime survey.
- 3.2. Developed indicative preliminary annual plan and annual reports on the implementation of the plan.
- 3.3. Developed schedule of planned working meetings.
- 3.4. CWL's annual activities report; Number of participants and workshops; Number of conducted research and publications, PhD dissertations, students thesis referring to the concept of work-life balance; Checklists made and analysis of their results.

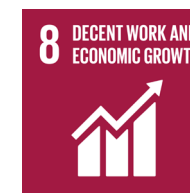
DIRECT/INDIRECT TARGETS

- ▶ People in leadership positions
- ▶ Academic staff
- ▶ Administrative staff
- ▶ Students and PhD Students

RESPONSIBLE BODIES

- ▶ Rector
- ▶ Vice-Rectors
- ▶ Dean
- ▶ CWL/GEP Team

SDG'S AGENDA:



AREA 2. GENDER-BALANCE IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING BODIES

OBJECTIVE 1.

Gender balanced leadership of the IBS and its decision-making bodies

OBJECTIVE 2.

Gender-sensitive and gender-responsive decision-making structures

MEASURES

- 1.1. Developing organizational policies and practices to maintain a balanced leadership and its decision-making bodies.
- 2.1. Conducting continuous oversight on decisions of the use of gender-sensitive language, rather than gender-neutral language.
- 2.2. Participation of a GE expert in the meetings of the governing bodies in order to monitor and help avoiding terms and the formulation of decisions (formal and informal) that may be patronizing or belittling to one gender.

INDICATORS

- 1.1. The current gender profile of all decision-making committees is visible. Developed organizational policies and practices.
- 2.1. Using of gender-sensitive language.
- 2.2. Number of GE expert's participations in the meetings of the governing bodies. Annual report from the GE expert.

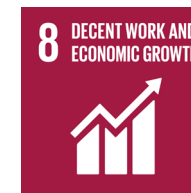
DIRECT/INDIRECT TARGETS

- ▶ President
- ▶ Vice-President
- ▶ Rector
- ▶ Vice-Rectors
- ▶ Dean
- ▶ Chief Executive Officer

RESPONSIBLE BODIES

- ▶ Rector
- ▶ WLC/GEP Team

SDG'S AGENDA:



AREA 2. GENDER-BALANCE IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING BODIES

OBJECTIVE 3.

Enhancing visibility of women as potential leaders and raising gender awareness among female and male leaders

MEASURES

- 3.1. Launching Summer School “Gender-integrated Leadership in Academia”.
- 3.2. Organizing short-term training “Gender Competent Leadership” for developing tools to deal with resistance to gender issues and for change management.
- 3.3. Offer women mentoring program and consultation on leadership and entrepreneurship skills and self-confidence.

INDICATORS

- 3.1. CWL’s annual activities report. Launched Summer School, number of participants; Feedback Survey results.
- 3.2. CWL’s annual activities report. Organized short-term training, Number of participants; Feedback Survey results; Developed and implemented in practice sample tools.
- 3.3. CWL’s annual activities report. Developed mentoring program. Number of participants; Feedback Survey results.

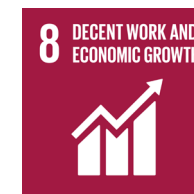
DIRECT/INDIRECT TARGETS

- ▶ Women entrepreneurs
- ▶ Women in leadership positions
- ▶ Academic staff
- ▶ Administrative staff
- ▶ Internal and external stakeholders
- ▶ Representatives of business and industry

RESPONSIBLE BODIES

- ▶ WLC/GEP Team

SDG’S AGENDA:



OBJECTIVE 1.

Ensuring that women and men get equal chances to develop and advance their scientific careers

MEASURES

- 1.1. Critically reviewing the existing selection and attestation processes and procedures and remedying gender biases where these occur.
- 1.2. Developing gender-sensitive procedures and rules for attestation.
- 1.3. Organizing training for those involved in hiring processes to avoid unconscious or implicit gender bias.
- 1.4. Organizing blind assessments of candidates' CVs.
- 1.5. Developing a policy regarding the balance of scientific, administrative and educational work.
- 1.6. Developing a gender sensitive procedure for the opportunity of the academic staff to take a sabbatical leave.

INDICATORS

- 1.1. Report on found gender biases.
- 1.2. Developed gender-sensitive procedures and rules for attestation.
- 1.3. CWL's annual activities report; Organized training.
- 1.4. Number of blind assessments
- 1.5. Developed policy and procedures.
- 1.6. Developed policy and procedures.

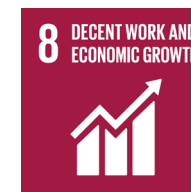
DIRECT/INDIRECT TARGETS

- ▶ Academic staff

RESPONSIBLE BODIES

- ▶ President
- ▶ Vice-President
- ▶ Rector
- ▶ CWL/GEP Team

SDG'S AGENDA:



AREA 4. GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

OBJECTIVE 1.

Promoting gender perspective in research activities and processes

MEASURES

- 1.1. Analysis of metrics-based databases. Tracking and monitoring gender assorted data in scientific publications from IBS's academic staff in WoS and Scopus.
- 1.2. Promote and apply gender sensitive language in research.
- 1.3. Awareness-raising in gender research and gender analysis in research. Establish internal training course/seminars on gender in research and norm-critical or intersectional analysis. Distribution of educational pamphlets.
- 1.4. Address gender gap in scientific research; scientific projects. Increase gender equality and gender mainstreaming in scientific research and gender-based studies.

INDICATORS

- 1.1. Annual reporting on disaggregated data (qualitative and quantitative).
- 1.2. Showcase of good gender research practices.
- 1.3. Number of participants, seminars and mentoring meetings, Making Gender-aware research more visible. Developed and distributed educational pamphlets.
- 1.4. Highlight and annual report on existing problems.

DIRECT/INDIRECT TARGETS

- ▶ Academic staff
- ▶ Students
- ▶ PhD students

RESPONSIBLE BODIES

- ▶ Vice-Rectors
- ▶ Dean
- ▶ CWL/GEP Team

SDG'S AGENDA:



AREA 4. GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

OBJECTIVE 2.

Improve equal gender representation in publishing processes' involved bodies

MEASURES

- 2.1. Assigning a GE expert to monitor publishing policies and practices under Center for Women's Leadership at IBS. Preparation of Guidelines for editors and authors.
- 2.2. Recognize and reduce gender-blind and gender-biased publication culture. Support of initiatives to reduce gender biases in scientific publishing and editorial process.
- 2.3. Establishing gender diversity in Editorial Boards and Editorial Management at IBS Publishing House.
- 2.4. Address gender gap in scientific peer-review. Increase open and gender-sensitive peer reviewing practices in IBS scientific editions and publications.

INDICATORS

- 2.1. Gender Equality Guidelines for Editors and Authors.
- 2.2. Review and evaluation of existing documents. Developed/gathered/announced case studies showing good practices of GE in scientific publishing.
- 2.3. Oversight of Editorial Boards appointment procedures.
- 2.4. Annual reporting on sex disaggregated publishing data. Monitor and evaluation of publishing, diversity and inclusion policies.

DIRECT/INDIRECT TARGETS

- ▶ Members of Editorial Boards
- ▶ Academic Staff
- ▶ Students
- ▶ PhD Students

RESPONSIBLE BODIES

- ▶ Vice Rectors
- ▶ Dean
- ▶ CWL/GEP Team

SDG'S AGENDA:



OBJECTIVE 3.

Awareness raising, promoting and including gender perspective in educational processes and content

MEASURES

- 3.1. Develop e-training resources on GE for students on all levels.
- 3.2. Enhance interest in Gender in research through trainings/workshops for students, young scientists, doctoral students.
- 3.3. Inclusion of Gender-related disciplines in Curriculum. Provide guidelines for course's structure, gender-sensitive contents and appropriate teaching methods.

INDICATORS

- 3.1. Database with e-training resources.
- 3.2. Showcase good practices. Annual report on results.
- 3.3. Participation in trainings and seminars on gender dimensions and integration in Curriculum. Annual evaluation of courses and materials.

DIRECT/INDIRECT TARGETS

- ▶ Academic Staff
- ▶ Students
- ▶ PhD Students

RESPONSIBLE BODIES

- ▶ Vice Rectors
- ▶ Dean
- ▶ CWL/GEP Team

SDG'S AGENDA:



- **PUBLICATION** - As according to the first requirement by “Horizon Europe Eligibility Criterion”(p. 9)¹⁾ IBS’s GEP is a formal document published on IBS’s website and signed by the Rector.

- **DEDICATED RESOURCES** - IBS’s management supports and commits its resources to all procedures and processes to promote gender equality change for a better, balanced and inclusive working environment and assures organizational support for the future plan’s initiatives. IBS’s structure that provides expertise on GE is the Center for Women’s Leadership. Gender Equality Group as part of CWL and its members has the necessary experience and expertise on GE work and GE projects (ADVANCE-FP6, FESTA-FP7, SPEAR-HORIZON 2020, etc.).

- **DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING** - GEP team carried out the initial assessment (sex and gender disaggregated data on personnel) of the GE state-of-play. According to “Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans” annual reports (2023, 2024, 2025, 2026) based on indicators are planned.

- **TRAINING** - IBS’s GEP includes awareness-raising activities and trainings on GE and unconscious biases. The planned activities are for all the academic staff, administrative staff, decision-makers, etc.

1. European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/876509>

SIGNED BY:

(S)
Rector:
(Prof. Dr. Georgi Apostolov)

IBS’s GEP WAS APPROVED BY ACADEMIC COUNCIL ON MARCH 30, 2022.



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