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# GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2026

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## Introduction

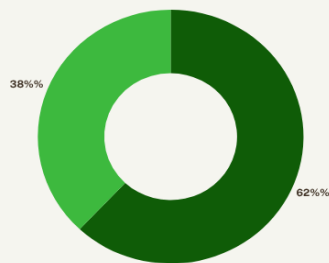
European Movement Albania (EMA) is an independent non-profit organisation combining think-tank and advocacy instruments on shaping the Albania's European Integration process discourse, and concomitantly promoting European values and other subject-matters related to the EU governance that underpin it. Since its establishment in February 2007 in Tirana, EMA has evolved beyond a traditional NGO, but as a network where evidence-based policy analysis meets grassroots advocacy, where national debates are enriched by regional perspectives through a vast number of local coordinators operating in cities across Albania as well. For more than a decade, EMA has worked tirelessly to advance human rights, strengthen the rule of law, and embed principles of good governance not only within Albania's borders but also across the wider Western Balkans. These commitments are not abstract but reflected in praxis, hence in every activity, research, and partnership we cultivate.

At the heart of our mission lies a belief that gender equality is not an auxiliary issue but a structural foundation of a just society. Our vision of democracy is inseparable from the recognition of gender as a spectrum and from the active dismantling of the barriers that perpetuate exclusion. We see gender equality as both a legal obligation enshrined in European and international instruments, and a moral requisite embedded in our daily organisational culture. In a context where many women and gender-diverse individuals continue to encounter systemic discrimination, and where leadership spaces in certain sectors remain stubbornly male-dominated, EMA's stance is unequivocal: we treat gender equality as a transformative agenda and believe it is non-binary, including members of the LGBTIQ+ community. It shapes how we recruit and nurture talent, how we design policies, and how we engage with partners.

To complement the Gender Equality Plan 2026, we are presenting below key organisational statistics for the year 2025. These figures provide important insights that should inform and guide the objectives outlined in the following sections.

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## Organisational Structure in Gender Terms 2025



EMA Staff and Board of Directors (8 individuals)

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**62%** women

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**38%** men

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Network of Experts (231 individuals)

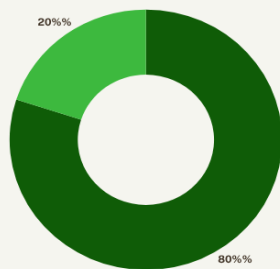
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**53%** women

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**47%** men

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Engaged Interns (5 individuals)

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**80%** women

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**20%** men

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In all recruitment processes, gender equality has consistently been a guiding principle, and gender considerations are integrated into the evaluation of applications, and hiring decisions. Historically, the majority of EMA's employees have been women; however, leadership positions and the composition of the Board of Directors have remained predominantly male. Recognising this imbalance, EMA has taken steps to shift this dynamic. While in previous years the Board consisted entirely of three male members, in 2024 a woman was appointed to the Board, marking a meaningful step toward greater gender diversity in leadership.

With regard to the pool of external experts engaged by EMA to support the implementation of its projects, policy research and overall objectives, the data show that the majority are women. Similarly, for the three-month internship program (with the possibility of extension) offered to students in Law, Political Science, Social Sciences, and related fields, it has been observed that in 2025 that from 5 interns, 4 were women and one man. When considering the aggregated data from previous years with a number of more than 55 interns in total, it becomes evident that male participation remains notably low. This highlights the need to actively pursue a more balanced gender representation in future internship cohorts.

## **GEP Rationale**

The development of this Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2026 responds to both EMA's internal commitment to inclusive practices and to external policy frameworks that define gender equality as a core value. The GEP seeks to critically assess and address the existing *status quo* through the lens of gender equality and intersectionality, calling for concrete measures to bring meaningful change. Throughout the document, particular attention has been paid to inclusive linguistic framing, ensuring that terminology avoids any discriminatory connotations. While the plan primarily refers to "women" and "men" in line with available data and reporting standards, it explicitly acknowledges and is mindful of the potential exclusion experienced by individuals whose gender identities fall outside these binary categories.

While developing this plan, the regulatory framework is guided by certain legal instruments and strategies that need to shape its content and structure. **On a national level**, EMA has paid attention to the following:

1) Albanian Legislation on Gender Equality precisely the *Law No. 64/2025, dated 6 November 2025, "On Gender Equality"*<sup>1</sup>, pursuant to Articles 78 and 83(1) of the Constitution. This law is founded on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, as well as on other principles enshrined in the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* and in all other international instruments ratified by the Republic of Albania. In addition, the framework draws on Law No. 221, dated 04.02.2010, *"On Protection from Discrimination,"*<sup>2</sup> as amended, which guarantees that no one may be discriminated against on the grounds of gender. This law was further strengthened by Law No. 124/2020, *"On some additions and amendments to Law No. 221/04.02.2010 on Protection from Discrimination,"*<sup>3</sup> which, among other improvements, further clarifies the scope of the law, introduces additional definitions, emphasizes the prohibition of hate speech, and provides a clearer definition of severe forms of discrimination that are of major concern when addressing the marginalisation of women and other genders.

2) *National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021–2030)*<sup>4</sup> as the key Albanian strategic document with clear objectives, which sets out the country's long-term vision to promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination between women and men in all areas of life, strengthen institutional mechanisms for gender mainstreaming, prevent and respond to gender-based violence and domestic violence, and ensure that central and local governance structures adopt policies and practices that foster gender equality.

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<sup>1</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Albania, no. 229. Law No. 64/2025 "On Gender Equality", 06.11.2025.

<https://qbz.gov.al/eli/ligj/2025/11/06/64/64e35cab-bddd-47a5-ba6d-4611a746b0ff;q=Ligji%20per%20barazine%20gjinore%202025>

<sup>2</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Albania, no. 15. Law No. 221, "On Protection from Discrimination" dated 04.02.2010. <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/ligj/2010/02/04/10221>

<sup>3</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Albania, no. 1991. Law No. 124/2020, "On some additions and amendments to Law No. 221/04.02.2010 on Protection from Discrimination" <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/ligj/2020/10/15/124/c6d5d6ef-dbcc-45a0-beb0-5eff962b4546>

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Health and Social Protection. National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021–2030), June 2021. [https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/WEB\\_Strategjia-Kombetare-AL.pdf](https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/WEB_Strategjia-Kombetare-AL.pdf)

- **At the European level**, EMA has aligned this GEP with key EU gender equality frameworks:

1) *European Commission's A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*<sup>5</sup> as a guiding strategic document on how to develop policies within the organization while considering gender equality a core value. EMA has also been induced by institutionalized gender mainstreaming when it comes to organizing, improving, drafting and evaluating policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all approaches at all levels.

2) Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)<sup>6</sup> provided by the European Commission's Directorate General for Research and Innovation, which outlines that in order to develop a GEP, four mandatory process-related requirements should be fully respected and provided, namely the **publicity** of the documents published on the organisation's official website; **dedicated resources** to implement the plan; **data collection and monitoring** to gather disaggregated data related to gender/sex and subsequent analysis; and lastly **training** not only for the organisation's staff but also for awareness raising.

Apart from this, EMA has paid attention to the key check and questions and concrete cases developed by the European Institute on Gender Equality's Informational Transformation - Gender Mainstreaming Tool.<sup>7</sup> As this tool identifies the extrinsic and intrinsic benefits of gender equality, EMA also acknowledges the importance of a robust follow-up phase. After the implementation of each gender equality objective, the outcomes will be evaluated to determine whether the objectives have been achieved and to identify areas for improvement. Accordingly, the implementation status of the GEP

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<sup>5</sup> European Commission, A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020 -2025, Brussels, 5.3.2020. <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en#:~:text=The%20Gender%20Equality%20Strategy%202020%2D2025%20sets%20out%20key%20actions,in%20all%20EU%20policy%20areas.&text=Striving%20for%20a%20Union%20of,all%20their%20diversity%20%2D%20are%20equal>.

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffcb06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

<sup>7</sup>European Institute on Gender Equality (EIGE), Informational Transformation - Gender Mainstreaming Tool, Vilnius, 2016. <https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/mh0716094enn.pdf>

will be reviewed on an annual basis, taking into account the specific contextual developments and organisational needs of each year.



*A typical GEP cycle*

*Source: Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pg. 12 <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffc06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

## Diagnosis of the 2025 situation

The internal review of EMA's 2025 GEP provided valuable insights into both progress achieved and areas where further efforts are needed. Overall, the evaluation confirmed, even though much work should be taken, the mechanisms put in place have strengthened equal opportunities in recruitment, participation in different activities organised by EMA, research driven by women, etc. EMA's policies were found to be broadly consistent with national legislation and aligned with European and international principles on equality, non-discrimination, and gender balance. Moreover, EMA successfully integrated gender-sensitive considerations in the design of several projects, ensuring inclusivity in the selection of lecturers, trainers, researchers, moderators and participants of different events most importantly, because the final output should be given to them.

However, the evaluation also highlighted several stumbling blocks that need to be addressed to improve the functioning of the organization and to meet both short- and long-term objectives more effectively:

- Encourage team participation in external training and courses on gender equality and related topics, with a particular focus on online learning opportunities aligned with EU standards.
- Implement targeted outreach and communication activities to address the underrepresentation of men in applications for professional internships, calls for articles, and participation in capacity-building programmes, while ensuring full adherence to merit-based selection principles.
- Strengthen internal capacity-building initiatives by promoting awareness and understanding of the new *Law No. 64/2025* on Gender Equality, the Intersectoral Strategy for the Protection of Victims of Crime 2024-2030, and other relevant updated legal frameworks in this field.
- While basic monitoring exists, more systematic data collection, supported by clear indicators and an annual internal report would enable EMA to track progress more precisely and respond quickly to emerging gaps.

These lessons directly inform the priorities and actions outlined in the 2026 GEP. The next

section will translate these reflections into clear objectives ensuring that gender equality is not only maintained but further strengthened across all levels of the organization.

## GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

# OUR PRIORITY AREAS

The structure of EMA's GEP is designed in accordance with the Horizon Europe recommendations, ensuring that the plan sets out well-defined objectives and concrete measures aligned with the five minimum priority areas identified in the framework:

1  
**WORK-LIFE  
BALANCE AND  
ORGANISATIONAL  
CULTURE**



2



**GENDER BALANCE IN  
LEADERSHIP AND  
DECISION-MAKING**

3  
**GENDER EQUALITY  
IN RECRUITMENT  
AND CAREER  
PROGRESSION**



4



**INTEGRATION OF  
GENDER DIMENSION  
INTO RESEARCH  
AND TEACHING  
CONTENT**

5  
**MEASURES  
AGAINST GENDER-  
BASED VIOLENCE,  
INCLUDING  
SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT**



## The Priority Areas of Intervention

The table below outlines the priority areas, detailing corresponding objectives, measures, targets, and assigned responsibilities for each.

Priority Area 1: Work-Life Balance and Organisational Culture			
Objectives	Measures	Target	Responsible
1) Ensure that all staff, external collaborators, interns, and stakeholders are aware of EMA's GEP and its implementation measures	Publish the full GEP on EMA's official website and circulate it through EMA's mailing list	Share it with EMA's extensive mailing list (approx. 3,000 contacts) within the first half of the year  Introduce GEP at least in one event and one dedicated social media post for general public visibility	Communication Officer in collaboration with project coordinators
	Include key GEP principles and updates in newsletters, publications and social media posts		
	Highlight GEP objectives during internal meetings, workshops/trainings, and other public events		
2) Mainstream gender-sensitive language across all EMA documents, policy briefs, recommendations, and public communications	Systematically review and revise the language of all documents, reports, and policy outputs before publication	The checklist to	
	Establish an internal		

	<p>checklist for inclusive and non-discriminatory language use</p>	<p>be compiled upon the finalisation of GEP and disseminated with EMA staff, partners and broader public who use EMA's outputs</p>	<p>Project Director, Communication Officer, Policy Researchers and Experts</p>
<p>Consult with a gender equality expert and a linguist when drafting sensitive texts</p>	<p>Conduct regular revisions of website content and public materials to ensure the elimination of any biased or derogatory terminology</p>		
<p><b>3) Develop and implement family-friendly policies that foster work-life balance</b></p>	<p>Introduce flexible working arrangements (remote work options, adaptable schedules) without discrimination</p>		
<p>Explore support mechanisms for employees with caregiving responsibilities, such as adjusted workloads during specific periods</p>	<p>Monitor implementation through periodic feedback surveys compiled by the staff and adjust where</p>		

	necessary		
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Priority Area 2: Gender balance in leadership and decision-making			
Objectives	Measures	Target	Responsible
1) Strengthen representation of gender-diverse individuals in senior positions	Integrate gender-awareness and equality commitments into all job descriptions, recruitment notices, and competency frameworks	For every senior position recruitment or promotion, making efforts to identify and include women and gender-diverse professionals in the shortlist	Project Director in cooperation with Board of Directors
	Highlight role models by using social media campaigns and diverse media outlets to showcase successful gender-equality practices and leadership examples		
2) Create a Leadership Talent Pool	Build and maintain a database of qualified women or men and gender-diverse professionals within EMA's networks ready for	Include at least 30 qualified professionals (with a balanced gender distribution) in the database for 2026	Project Director and Communication Officer

	nomination to boards, expert groups, and senior positions		
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**Priority Area 3: Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression**

Objectives	Measures	Target	Responsible
<b>1) Ensure equal access to professional growth, training, and advancement opportunities for all staff, with a focus on removing gender-based barriers</b>	Provide equitable access to internal and external training, conferences, and project-based learning opportunities	Minimum 50% participation of women and gender-diverse staff/network members in all funded training or development programmes per year	Project Director
<b>2) Support career progression and retention of employees returning from parental, maternity, or family-related leave</b>	<p>Design and implement tailored training, upskilling, and mentorship programmes to support re-integration after leave</p> <p>Monitor career trajectories post-return to ensure equitable opportunities for promotion and leadership</p>	EMA staff (employees returning from leave) and junior or mid-level coordinators preparing for senior roles	

	development		
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Priority Area 4: Integration of Gender Dimension in Research and Capacity Building Content			
Objectives	Measures	Targets	Responsible
<b>1) Promote the inclusion of sex and gender dimensions in all research activities and outputs</b>	Require research proposals and project plans to explicitly address sex and gender dimensions where relevant	All our projects to include a gender dimension assessment by the end of the implementation period	Policy Researchers and Project Coordinators
	Develop a repository of best practices and case studies showcasing successful integration of gender in research	Repository of at least 5 best-practice examples created to be delivered to EMA's staff, researchers and collaborators	
<b>2) Encourage the integration of gender-sensitive content in training, and dissemination materials</b>	Revise materials, presentations and particularly MEL content to include examples, case studies, and readings that address gender issues relevant to each discipline	All new or revised materials to include at least one module or session addressing gender dimensions by this year	Project Coordinators and Trainers
	Provide trainers during workshops with guidelines and resource packs on mainstreaming		

	gender in educational content		
<b>3)Promote dialogue and advocacy on gender equality in research and teaching through public engagement</b>	Hold public events on integrating gender equality in public debates	At least 1 public event such as a roundtable on gender equality and/or related subject-matters within the National Convention on European Integration (NCEI), established by EMA since 2014, with at least 5 policy recommendations produced by participating interest groups and published on the official website of EMA and NCEI for further consultation	Project Coordinator of NCEI
	Publish policy recommendations that highlight gaps and propose actionable steps for gender mainstreaming in research and teaching		

Priority Area 5: Measures against Gender-balanced Violence, including sexual harassment			
Objectives	Measures	Targets	Responsible
<b>1) Educating staff about different forms of bias and strategies to combat sexual and gender-based harassment</b>	Design and implement mandatory training and capacity-building programmes on sexual harassment, gender-based violence (GBV), and unconscious bias	100% of staff, interns, and external experts trained annually on GBV and harassment prevention, and also, the general public on these concerns	The responsible person for SEA-H
<b>2) A designated focal point for SEA-H appointed with clear responsibilities which ensure accessibility, transparency, and awareness raising for this matter</b>	The organisation has a survivor-centered approach where internal reporting and escalation contact for SEA-H incidents and ensure compliance with organisational policies and relevant legal frameworks	All staff, interns, and external collaborators must be informed on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEA-H)	
	Periodic refreshers (e.g., e-learning modules, workshops, or briefings) are provided to ensure knowledge and	At least one public event organised with this topic in focus	

	vigilance are maintained over time		
	Regular reminders (emails, visibility communications on social media) highlight ethics rules, zero-tolerance policies, and updated reporting pathways		

### Monitoring process and follow up reports

As outlined throughout the other sections, a committed team made up of elected staff and a seasoned gender equality expert leads the charge in driving the implementation of EMA’s Gender Equality Plan (GEP). This unit does not just “tick boxes” but they actively push for real, tangible change that transforms the workplace into a genuinely inclusive and equitable environment. They rigorously track progress, spotlight both wins and obstacles, and hold all parts of the organisation accountable for delivering on their gender equality commitments. Monitoring is not simply about oversight, it is a tool for building momentum and embedding gender equality into our organisational culture and beyond. By demanding transparency, encouraging honest feedback, and driving continuous course corrections, the unit ensures that positive changes do not fade away but grow stronger over time

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European Commission, A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, Brussels, 5.3.2020.

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