



Fondazione LINKS

Gender Equality Action Plan

2022 - 2024

Version	Date	Comments	Approved by
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction.....	3
2	LINKS profile and values	3
3	Description of the Plan	5
4	Key Areas and Objectives selected for LINKS GEP	8
4.1	Key Area 1: Work and Personal Life Integration.....	8
4.1.1	List of Objectives.....	8
4.1.2	Actions planned to reach the objectives	8
4.1.3	Indicators	9
4.2	Key area 2: Gender equality in Research and teaching content	10
4.2.1	List of Objectives.....	10
4.2.2	Actions planned to reach the objectives	10
4.2.3	Team / Department in charge of the actions	10
4.2.4	Indicators	10
4.3	Key Area 3: Recruitment and Career Progression	11
4.3.1	List of Objectives.....	11
4.3.2	Actions planned to reach the objectives	11
4.3.3	Team / Department in charge of the actions	12
4.3.4	Indicators	12
4.4	Key Area 4: Gender Equality in Governance Bodies and Decision Makers	12
4.4.1	List of Objectives.....	12
4.4.2	Actions planned to reach the objectives	13
4.4.3	Team / Department in charge of the actions	13
4.4.4	Indicators	14



1 Introduction

Fondazione LINKS takes into consideration the principles of gender equality and diversity issue in its operations and research activities, and promotes the provision of equal opportunities in research for men and women. In line with the current national and EU guidelines included in the plans drawn up at national (Action for Gender Equality 2021-2025) and at European level (Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025, Gender equality in the European Research Area), LINKS currently organises and revises its practices under a Gender Equality Plan (GEP), prepared for the period 2021-2024.

The objectives of LINKS' GEP are the following:

1. Analysis of the current situation and check of procedures and practices applied in LINKS, in order to identify possible weaknesses or gaps.
2. Identification and implementation of innovative practices to address possible identified issues.
3. Setting of objectives and continuous review of the applied practices through a participatory approach and the monitoring of validated indicators.

The GEP takes into consideration the LINKS Strategic Plan for the period 2022 - 2024 and all other instruments for employee's well-being and equality (such as the activities of Sustainability and Future Committee). The Committee launched in March 2023 and made up of some researchers representing the different research domains. It is aimed to be a space for discussion to spread the culture of sustainability and the development of concrete projects at the service of employees.

The dedicated **GEP working team** is composed by the Managing Director, the HR manager, and some members of the "Sustainability and Future Committee". The team and responsibilities during the implementation phase may change, in order to ensure an inclusive yet efficient approach. The presence of representatives from the top management will anyway be assured to facilitate and speed up the decisions, and implementations related to the plan.

2 LINKS profile and values

Fondazione LINKS is a non-profit research organisation founded by Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation – the largest Italian bank foundation – and Politecnico di Torino – the oldest engineering university in Italy. LINKS has been envisaged as an "instrument", that is to say an institution that operates in applied research, innovation and technology transfer and whose mission is to be a bridge between basic research and market.

LINKS has been working for almost 20 years at national and international level, having merged the competences and backgrounds of two previous research Institutes, Istituto Superiore Mario Boella (IMSB) and Istituto sui Sistemi Territoriali per l'Innovazione (SiTI). Thanks to the cooperation of more than 160 researchers the Foundation operates in the fields of digital technology and regional development. Research activities cover several ICT domains, among which Artificial Intelligence, connected systems and IoT, cybersecurity, advanced computing systems, satellite navigation, Earth Observation, photonics, and more. Specific focus is given to the application of these scientific domains in sectors such as Industry 4.0, Intelligent Mobility, Agritech, Space Economy, Smart infrastructures, Cultural Heritage.



LINKS aims to promote, lead and bolster the innovation processes, through international research projects with a strong innovation potential and impact on productive and public sectors. Thus, LINKS acts as facilitator of the innovative ecosystem, with specific focus on Piedmont area.

Fondazione LINKS ramps the competitiveness up working with big multinational corporations and highly innovative small and medium enterprises, but aims to “ramp the common good up” too by partnering with public institutions, intermediate bodies, non-profit and cultural institutions.

The Foundation’s true wealth is in the people that work here: young, highly specialized, with a deep know-how and passion for their job, highly motivated in achieving sound results by balancing teamwork and high level of autonomy.

LINKS is closely connected to Politecnico di Torino: besides being hosted on campus by the University, most of its researchers hold a degree in engineering or architecture, and many of them graduated at Politecnico di Torino. 33% of LINKS researchers are women, a proportion similar to the one found at Politecnico di Torino where women represent the 30% of the teaching staff (Figure 1).

152 Researchers

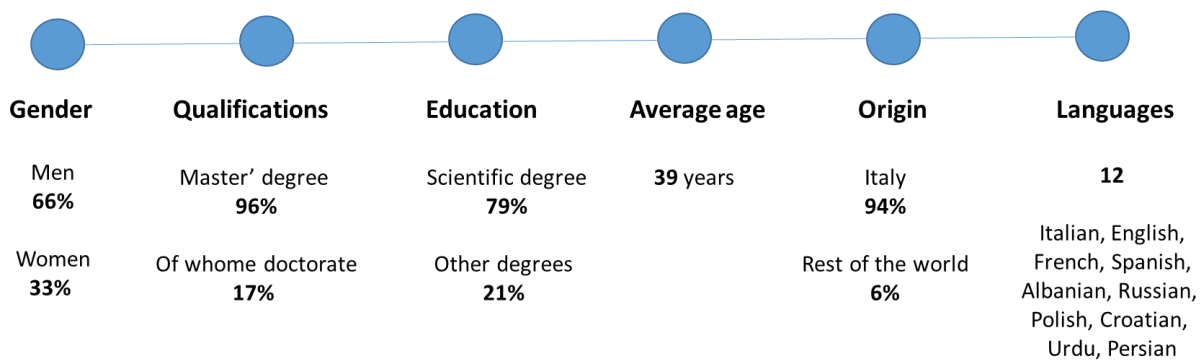


Figure 1. LINKS Researchers as of end of 2022

It is worth mentioning **the company values** that were set by LINKS Foundation with a bottom up and participative effort end of 2020. These are:

- **Sharing:** together we’re stronger
- **Trust:** I’m OK and you’re OK
- **Care about people:** people who work here are our real asset
- **Sense of belonging:** from ME to US
- **Continuous improvement:** there is always a better way
- **Culture of change:** we’re passionate about changing the future
- **Proactivity:** we’re entrepreneurs and we stand by it
- **Sustainability:** we work for the future of the Society and of the Foundation.



3 Description of the Plan

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for LINKS Foundation, together with its implementation which started in the Fall of 2021, is part of an “continuous process”, constantly revised and updated. As mentioned above, it is rooted both from practices that have been part of LINKS organization and principles for several years, and from guidelines from the European Commission and best practices implemented by other research organizations.

Some of the actions and initiatives included in the plan were inspired by EU guidelines and projects like PLOTINA¹, an H2020 project aimed at supporting RPOs (Research Performing Organizations) willing to undertake the path towards a better gender equality.

The general life cycle of a GEP (which is a continuously ongoing set of procedures and documents) is represented in Figure 2

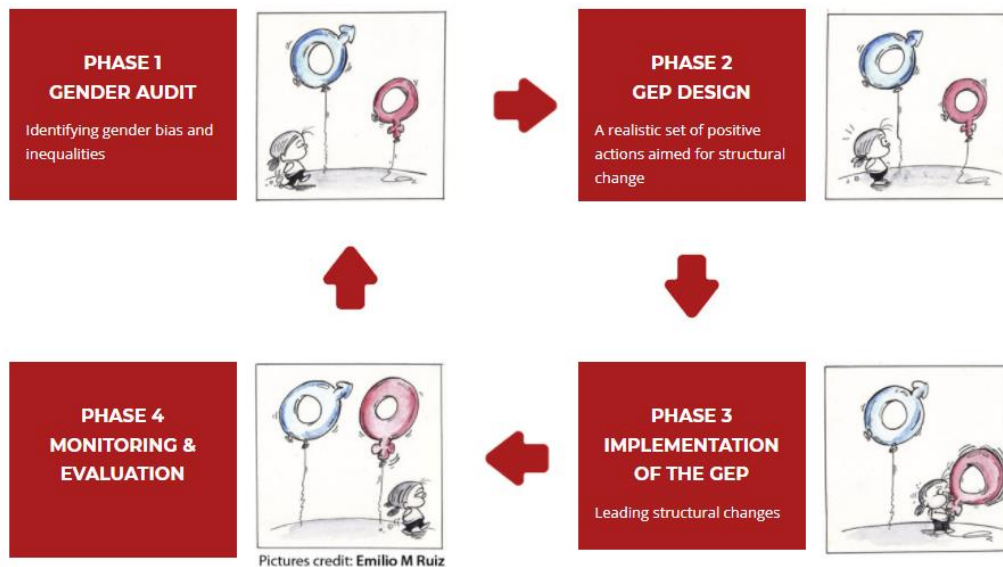


Figure 2. The continuous life cycle of the Gender Equality Plan

¹ www.plotina.eu



The plan draws inspiration and its main structure both from well-known principles and from the results of a **Gender Audit** procedure whose main purpose is highlighting the current situation within LINKS, pointing out the strengths and the possible critical conditions, an essential base to build the following phase, the **GEP detailed design**. The GEP team will coordinate all the Gender Audit activities involving other necessary employees (Gender Audit Team).

The **GEP design** is then followed by the **actual implementation**, for which a detailed timeline must be specified, and finally a **monitoring and evaluation** phase aimed at checking the obtained outcomes against the planned expectations.

Among the areas of intervention commonly included in the GEP of an RPO, we selected the following four, also shown in Figure 3:

- Work and Personal Life integration
- Gender Equality in Research
- Recruitment and Career progression
- Gender Equality in Governing Bodies and Decision Makers (includes also: measures against gender-based harassment)



Figure 3. Areas of intervention for LINKS' GEP

These areas will be the targets included in the first version of the GEP. It is likely that during the GEP implementation process additional areas will be highlighted and will be included in the future versions of this plan.

In order to critically assess the state of play of LINKS Foundation in terms of procedures and practices with a view to detect gender inequalities and gender bias a structured data analysis needs to be done. Data collected are indispensable to define SMART objectives and measure the impact of initiatives. A first analysis of LINKS data has been done and included in this version of the GEP. Moreover, GEP data collection contributes to the “LINKS KPI” activities, aimed to periodically collect and evaluate data for assessing the performances of the organization. Different types of data are used:

- demographics,
- data collected by specific internal areas (e.g. communication, HR, etc.),



- data collected through ad-hoc surveys (e.g. within the Together WE STAND project, and for LINKS Mobility Plan).

Such analysis will consider LINKS Foundation peculiarities and will be based on the guidelines provided by EU official documentation, such as the [GEAR Guide for establishing a Gender Equality Plan](#).

Information provided in the following part of this document is based on the existing measures promoting gender equality in LINKS.

The pandemic condition experienced in the past years and the recent reorganization of the Foundation in six areas² were the first opportunities for LINKS to collect through online questionnaires requests from its researchers and employees on several topics, some of which were closely related to gender equality measures. Even before having formalized this GEP, LINKS responded to some of these requests by introducing changes in its working environment and organization, particularly in the area of “work and personal life” integration and balancing (smart working project started in Summer 2019 – before the COVID-19 emergency - and its wide adoption during the lockdown periods).

Furthermore, the Together WE STAND - Welfare for SusTAiNability and Development – project as follow-up of the previous WE WIN TOGETHER¹, implemented by the LINKS Foundation and Collegio Carlo Alberto and co-financed by the Piedmont Region, was launched in May 2023 and will last in 18 months. The objective of the project is to encourage the development and implementation of a shared corporate and territorial welfare plan, optimizing services aimed at improving the levels of work-life balance. The project includes a survey activity addressed to the employees, useful for analyzing their needs regarding the work-life balance and their well-being. The survey is essential for investigating the expression of employee preferences regarding the services and initiatives that the project plans to activate. Some of the actions realized will be taken over and kept as good practices in the GEP implementation.

The following sections include a focus on each of the selected areas, listing the objectives that LINKS identified with highest priority, actions to be implemented as well as targets and indicators.

² five research oriented departments (Domains) and one organisational unit

¹ The project, co-funded by the Piedmont Government through the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund, has been implemented by LINKS. The project promoted and implemented training actions and information activities aiming at sensitizing workers and management to activate wellbeing measures and to adopt healthy and sustainable lifestyles.



4 Key Areas and Objectives selected for LINKS GEP

4.1 Key Area 1: Work and Personal Life Integration

4.1.1 List of Objectives

In line with its nature of Research Centre - focused on innovation and strongly connected with the university environment – LINKS carries out research, prototyping and technology transfer activities.

Research is, by nature, a type of job allowing some part of flexibility and can be partly carried out independently and/or remotely. However, research, but also and mainly prototyping and technology transfer require also that some activities are carried out in presence.

The list of objectives identified by LINKS for this Key Area is presented in Table 1.

Obj ID	Objective Name
1.1	Develop a corresponsible working culture
1.2	Ensure availability of structured supports for work and personal life integration
1.3	Enable individuals on parental leave to have an easier return to work

Table 1. LINKS GEP Objectives for Key Area 1

4.1.2 Actions planned to reach the objectives

Action 1 – flexible organization of work

Ongoing activities

LINKS has implemented a flexible organization of work:

- leaving the different research and operations teams the freedom to organize their work as needed to reach the assigned goals.
- Allowing flexible working time during the working day as well as accessing different types of part-time contracts.

Smart working was first tested in mid-2019 offering some employees the opportunity to work out of LINKS' facilities for about 20% of the total working time per month. Employees were provided with a laptop and a modem.

The pandemic started in 2020 forced LINKS (and most organizations) to speed up the process, introducing smart working for a significant portion of the time (up to 100% during lockdown). In the Spring of 2020, a survey was proposed to all LINKS employees, to check whether the abrupt increment in smart working caused issues in the organization of work and personal life. Another survey was proposed in February 2021, in the framework of the LINKS project WE WIN TOGETHER. Those surveys represented the base for the design of new rules and a new organization of work (the so-called "post pandemic new normal"), pushing paperless operations even further and introducing digital signature functionalities for most of the approval requirements of internal processes.

Future activity

The TOGETHER WE STAND project in 2023 will update and assess the status and the satisfaction about smart-working.



Action 2 – work-life balance

Ongoing activities

The Italian law allows “shore leaves” (Permessi) on top of the normal holydays. Shore leaves are specifically designed to manage work and private life balance, for example in case of any urgency in family.

The Gender Audit Team will run periodic surveys (at least once per year) in order to give all employees, the possibility of making any inconvenience and other issues emerge, and will also assess the effective use of smart working and shore leaves.

Parental leave is already in place where required by the Italian job regulation, and it is equally available for men and women.

The majority of activities carried out in LINKS (with the only exception of administration and management) are organized in projects, divided in work packages and tasks. This makes it easy to allocate the proper amount of work to the researchers considering parental leave and other days off. The administration team got organized throughout the years to make sure parental leave does not have an impact on individuals when they get back to work. Specific questions will be introduced in the periodic auditing procedures in order to detect issues as soon as possible.

Future activity

The presentation of the “LINKS Mobility Plan” in 2023 will contribute to improve sustainable lifestyles among employees.

Team / Department in charge of the actions

The HR team performs checks and activities aimed at ensuring that employees in LINKS can benefit from a good work-life balance consistently with the activity and sustainability of the Foundation. Periodic surveys will be organized and run by the Gender Audit Team following guidelines coming from HR and General Management.

The organization of the work of the project teams is responsibility of the Domains and Objective leaders: during the Management Committee meetings the situation and progress of the work / personal life balance will be evaluated on a regular basis every 3 months, or on demand should any urgent matter arise.

4.1.3 Indicators

Action	Indicator	2022
1	Smart work: Number of Days / Head Count (monthly average)	TOT = 7,2; M = 6,7; F = 8,1
	Smart work: Satisfaction	<i>Foreseen for 2023</i>
2	Shore leaves (average number of hours per employee per year)	TOT= 51,1; M= 47,1; F = 59,1
2	Number of employees who have children under 8 years old (and as % of the corresponding population)	TOT=28 (18,4%) M = 14 (14%); F =14 (28%)
2	Number of employees with part-time contracts (and as % of the corresponding population)	TOT = 12 (8%) M = 2 (2%); F = 10 (20%)
2	Number of employees beneficiaries of the incentives / initiatives within LINKS “Mobility plan” (if any)	<i>Foreseen for 2023</i>

Table 2 – LINKS GEP Indicators for Key Area 1



4.2 Key area 2: Gender equality in Research and teaching content

4.2.1 List of Objectives

The list of objectives identified by LINKS for this key area is included Table 3.

Obj ID	Objective Name
2.1	Promote diversity on research management
2.2	Advance towards a gender inclusive / aware research excellence
2.3	Raise awareness and train researchers on integrating the gender dimension in research content

Table 3 - LINKS GEP Objectives for Key Area 2

4.2.2 Actions planned to reach the objectives

Research is the main focus of LINKS Foundation, and research projects cover the majority of the activities carried out at LINKS offices and labs.

Action 3 – promotion of gender equality in research management (a) and teaching (b)

Ongoing activities

Gender equality has not been the focus of specific investigations in past years and an accurate analysis from this point of view has not been carried out recently. It is, therefore, a key goal introduced in the GEP: to plan and implement specific monitoring of the participation of individuals to research management with focus on gender balance, by including specific questions in the periodic Gender Audit. The goal of having gender equality in research management is closely related to the goal of gender equality in recruitment and career progression (Key Area 3), which will be evaluated and monitored as well.

4.2.3 Team / Department in charge of the actions

LINKS Governance (Members of the Board) and General Manager ask the Management team to ensure that management of research activities and projects is equally distributed between genders yet considering the gender distribution in the overall LINKS population and the competencies and experience level available by gender. The checks and improvement activities can be carried out by the HR team. The Gender Audit Team will organize surveys and will proactively search for guidelines coming from HR and General Management.

The organization of the work of the project teams is responsibility of the Domains and Objective leaders: during the weekly Management Committee meetings the current situation and progress of project management and research progression will be evaluated with a specific focus on gender equality once a year, or on demand should any urgent matter arise.

4.2.4 Indicators

Action	Indicator	Value 2022
3a	Number of projects on gender equality and well-being dimensions presented or executed during the year	3 projects in execution 5 project proposals presented
3a	Number of publications by gender	Publications (tot)= 52 Publications (male author) = 27; Publications (female author) = 25
3a	Number of researchers with one or more publications in 2022 (and as % of the corresponding population)	Tot authors = 27 (17,8%) Male authors = 15 (15%); Female authors = 12 (24%)



3a	Number of foreign employees by gender (and as % of the corresponding population)	TOT =9 (6%) M = 7 (6,9%); F = 2 (4%)
3b	Number of employees providing training courses during the year (for universities, schools, public or private organizations) by gender (and as % of the corresponding population)	TOT = 17 (11,2%) M = 14 (14%); F = 3 (6%)
3b	Number of employees participating to training courses during the year by gender (and as % of the corresponding population)	TOT = 37 (24,3%) M = 21 (21%); F = 16 (31%)
3b	LINKS employees participating to training courses: average duration (number of hours)	TOT = 16,7 M= 16,6; F=16,8

Table 4 - LINKS GEP Indicators for Key Area 2

4.3 Key Area 3: Recruitment and Career Progression

4.3.1 List of Objectives

The list of objectives identified by LINKS for this key area is included in Table 5

Obj ID	Objective Name
3.1	Ensure that every person involved in the recruitment process is aware of gender issues, discrimination and stereotypes
3.2	Promote gender inclusive and bias free recruitment, career progression, retention and evaluation policy in the institution
3.3	Understand more deeply the multiple gender biases that happen in the recruitment, career progression and retention processes
3.4	Ensure all individuals in the institution are empowered regardless of their gender
3.5	Ensure that the internal evaluation system is not gender-biased
3.6	Ensure a wide pool of diverse applicants is reached in all vacant positions

Table 5 - LINKS GEP Objectives for Key Area 3

4.3.2 Actions planned to reach the objectives

Action 4 – inclusion of the gender dimension in recruiting processes

Ongoing activities

Recruitment and people / career management is a key topic for a research center oriented to hi-tech disciplines. The recruitment process is divided between LINKS and PRISMA, the company in charge of recruitment for the whole Compagnia di San Paolo group.

This plan introduces specific actions and checks to make sure that all the colleagues involved in recruitment are aware of gender issues. Reaching this goal will be easier considering that all the organizations in the group started specific gender equality related actions and plans in the past months.

Some of the topics on which LINKS carries out its studies and research are more popular among men compared to women, and this is something that cannot be easily changed. A certain bias in the number of male and female employees in favor of males needs therefore to be considered normal for LINKS. A specific request to put special attention to gender equality in evaluating candidates will be issued to all the HR and recruiting teams of Links and PRISMA, so that it will become part of the LINKS regular hiring process.

In order to support young researchers to enrich their work experience in LINKS, in 2022 was launched the LINKS Academy initiative. The initiative is offered to all new hired employees and consists of the following activities: onboarding; association of a mentor, listening of needs and expectations, mid-term reviews, analysis of the results achieved through the “Report of the experience and skills acquired during the career path in LINKS Foundation” (a living document that is evolving together with the Mentee’s growth path). In this process the



collaboration between LINKS academy participants (new hired) and mentors is fundamental. A mentor, in fact, is a researcher with a consolidated experience in LINKS Foundation, whose role is to accompany, at a technical but above all “human” level, the researcher in his career path within the Foundation.

Action 5 – inclusion of the gender dimension in carrier progression strategies

Ongoing activities

As far as career progression goes, LINKS has appointed throughout the years some women in management positions (research management, team leader, members of the board, etc.). An accurate picture of the current situation has not been recently taken though, and it is going to be introduced by the GEP: this plan introduces specific monitoring of the recruitment and career evolution of individuals with focus on gender balance, also by including specific questions in the periodic Gender Audit.

4.3.3 Team / Department in charge of the actions

LINKS Governance (Members of the Board) and General Manager want to foster Diversity at all levels (gender, nationality, language...).

The Gender Audit Team will periodically conduct audits of the recruitment process including potential suppliers involved in the process and will include the guidelines coming from HR and General Management.

The HR team ensures that employment, hiring and career progression are managed fairly for all types of Diversity (taking into account the gender distribution in the overall LINKS population) and carries out periodic checks and self-assessments.

The selection and recruitment processes are initiated and partly managed by the Domains and Objective leaders: during the weekly Management Committee meetings the current state and the evolution of gender balance in the Links population will be evaluated on a regular basis every 3 months, or on demand should any urgent matter arise.

4.3.4 Indicators

Action	Indicator	2022
4	Number of people interviewed during recruiting process by gender	TOT = 102 M = 74; F = 28
4	Number of LINKS employees enrolled during the year by gender	TOT = 27 (17,8%) M = 22 (21,8%); F = 5 (9,8%)
5	Number of employees with research management responsibilities (program managers (PM) and head (H) of research domains / organizational units) [and as % of the corresponding population]	TOT = 23 (15 PM+8H) [15%] M = 17 (11 PM+6H) [17%] F = 6 (4 PM+2H) [12%]
4	Number of employees involved in the LINKS Academy, as participant (and as % of the corresponding population)	TOT = 20 (13%) M = 18 (18%); F = 2 (4%)
4 - 5	Number of employees involved in the LINKS Academy, as mentor (and as % of the corresponding population)	TOT = 12 (8%) M = 9 (9%); F = 3 (6%)

Table 6 - LINKS GEP Objectives for Key Area 3

4.4 Key Area 4: Gender Equality in Governance Bodies and Decision Makers

4.4.1 List of Objectives

The list of objectives identified by LINKS for this key area is included in Table 7.



Obj ID	Objective Name
4.1	Promote decision-makers institutional engagement on gender equality
4.2	Create structures and offer tools to support and promote gender equality in the institution with the engagement of key figures
4.3	Promote a more horizontal, gender-aware and egalitarian leadership in the institution
4.4	Prevent and combat sexual and gender-based harassment in the institution
4.5	Ensure all stakeholders are aware and have easy access to the information about the gender equality policy and GEP implementation

Table 7 - LINKS GEP Objectives for Key Area 4

4.4.2 Actions planned to reach the objectives

Action 6 – Involvement of LINKS decision makers in GEP implementation

Ongoing activities

The GEP detailed design phase has involved most of the decision-makers of LINKS, including the General Manager, the HR Manager and the research and operational groups leaders, in order to keep them informed and to collect their requirements and specific issues.

Action 7 – Communication tools

Ongoing activities

The GEP, all the periodic outcomes of the Gender Audit and all subsequent planned actions (GEP review) will be made available through the Foundation website (GEP and official documents) and Intranet (internal - use documents and reports). All Links employees will have access to these documents, in order to propagate the knowledge about all the actions taken or planned in the process towards gender equality.

Future activity

Moreover, regular updates about gender-related initiatives are going to be promoted on the LINKS intranet, through an ad hoc communication campaign

Action 8 – Organization of GEP - related initiatives

Future activity

LINKS will foster the discussion about gender equality aspects among its researchers organizing ad-hoc initiatives (e.g. webinars, meeting with experts, etc.) at least once a year.

NOTE: this key area includes also gender-based harassment aspects

4.4.3 Team / Department in charge of the actions

The activities aimed at having Governance Bodies and Decision Makers informed and involved in the most relevant procedures, decisions and activities related to Gender Equality are coordinated and carried out by the HR team and the General Manager. Specific surveys and information kits dedicated to Governing Bodies and Decision Makers will be organized by the Gender Audit Team following guidelines coming from HR and General Management.





The General Manager and the HR Director will ensure that the Administration Board and all the Governing Bodies (included the relevant people at the founding partners Compagnia di San Paolo and Politecnico di Torino) are updated with the progress of the GEP implementation, as well as with the current state and evolution of all Links activities from the gender equality point of view.

4.4.4 Indicators

Action	Indicator	2022
6	Number of meetings with LINKS decision makers for assessing GEP implementation	2
7	Number of news about initiatives addressed to promote gender equality and well-being ² communicated during the year through LINKS intranet	10 (tot general news) 4 (projects and workshops) ³
8	Number of initiatives addressed to promote gender equality and well-being <u>organized</u> during the year by LINKS	Foreseen for 2023
8	Number of employees participating to GEP-related initiatives organized by LINKS	Foreseen for 2023

Table 8 - LINKS GEP Indicators for Key Area 4

Torino, 31/01/2023	<p>Managing Director</p>  <p>.....</p>
Torino, 31/01/2023	<p>HR Manager</p>  <p>.....</p>

² Including initiatives aimed to contrast sexual and gender-based harassment promoted by the organization

³ News on initiatives/projects led by LINKS female researchers + news on specific projects on gender equality and well-being