



Gender Equality Plan (GEP)



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INTRODUCTION

CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL is highly committed to gender equality and actively supports actions against gender discrimination. CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL has been strongly devoted to equal rights, opportunities, and freedoms between genders. Respect for diversity and uniqueness is also among the core values CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL represents.

In this context CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL, as company that promotes innovation, moves further into committing to gender equality by adopting a Gender Equality Plan that formulates and embeds its values while at the same time fully abides with international and European standards.

Therefore, the so far practices regarding gender equality that were reflected in CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL's culture, are now taking a more binding character, one that a Gender Equality plan establishes.

SCOPE

The general purpose of the Policy is to promote and guarantee the equal rights of all employees regardless their gender and to protect them from all forms of maltreatment, exploitation and unequal treatment. It has been conducted after thorough research on gender -disaggregated data and after a detailed review on the processes CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL follows regarding gender issues.

In this context, CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL's Gender Equality Plan will collect and highlight good practices in the field. Thus, all CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL's team members will be devoted to the embracement and promotion of equality in all aspects of business life.

The present plan is part of a bigger initiative of CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL for broader engagement towards gender equality. It will work as a practical guide that will provide both instruments for improving the already existing practices and creating new tools of identifying and measuring progress. Furthermore, the gender equality plan will summarize all commitments and principles CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL undertakes in the context of Gender Equality. More specifically this Gender Equality Plan establishes CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL's commitment to:

- **Promoting gender equality among its employees and partners.** Everyone shall be treated equal regarding working conditions and career opportunities. Taking all appropriate measures for the equal treatment of all employees regardless their gender.
- **Maintaining equality and inclusion into all company's policies and processes.** Recruitment and promotions procedures shall always take into consideration the gender equality dimension. A general balance between the presence of women and men at all positions (e.g. management positions) shall be ensured. Also, a gender balance shall be kept in decision making processes. For that reason, at least 50% of the participants during the aforementioned processes shall be women. At the same time, it shall be guaranteed that all members of decision makers and leaders will receive adequate training on gender equality issues so that the importance of pluralism to be understood.
- **Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women at all stages of professional life.**
- **Supporting the development of women's career perspective.** Special focus shall be put to improve career prospects for women and to support career development through continuous trainings and capacity building that will boost skills and qualifications.
- **Promotion of equal opportunities when recruiting new staff.** Especially during interviews and relevant recruiting processes, it will be ensured that new employees will be selected on criteria based on their skills and qualifications. Their gender or maternity/pregnancy status shall not be a criterion for selection or exclusion from the procedure. The same principle applies to promotion processes.
- **Establishing a zero-tolerance culture towards gender violence.** Within this context CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL acknowledges the term 'Gender-based Violence' defined by the United Nations Women Report of the Expert Group Meeting (December 2010) and is committed to the elimination of the all forms of such actions.
- **Creating a safe workplace where women feel comfortable enough to communicate their needs.** CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL takes into consideration the definition of Sexual and Psychological harassment that are described in Instruction No 44 of the Secretary General on the Protection of Human Dignity in the Workplace (2002) and is committed to taking all necessary actions to eliminate such phenomena. Any employee who feels subjected to forms of unwanted actions shall be encouraged and supported by Managing Board to report the incident.

- **Fostering a 'Special Contact'.** An employee, adequately trained on relative issues upon giving his/her consent, shall be appointed as the person to whom anyone that has felt his/her boundaries have been crossed can address their issue. This person shall be responsible for reposting the incident to the members of Managing Board in order for them to take all necessary measures.

- **Implementing innovative practices for the capacity building of all employees on Gender Equality in order to eliminate any unconscious biases.** Regularly seminars and trainings shall be held for the capacity building and awareness of the personnel on issues related to gender equality. Those seminars will not be limited only on equality within the working place but will focus more broadly on gender equality, taking into consideration the rise of violence against women at national level and aiming by informing to help eliminate such events. The status of knowledge of the participants will be compared anonymously before and after the training so that progress can be verified.

- **Collection and analysis of data on gender equality.** The sharing of men and women across all Institute's positions shall be reported. Indicatively, some of the data that are going to be collected are the rates of staff at different positions based on gender, the rates of men and women that were recruited, etc. Monitor of the data

collected will be conducted in an annual basis, so that progress or remaining gaps will be identified.

- **Continuously evaluating and monitoring all aforementioned commitments.** In order to ensure compliance with the aforementioned guidelines, continuous control and monitor will be held. The same control shall apply to gender-based data collection and analysis.

The Policy is to be considered binding for all the staff and the members of the Board of Directors. CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL provides, through the dissemination of clear and precise guidelines, to the training of staff, and members of the Board of Directors on issues related to gender equality and on behaviors to be implemented and boundaries within which to stay within the business environment. Staff, and members of the Board of Directors are required to comply with the Policy.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS & POLICIES

The rights of women for equal treatment in the working place and their protection against any action that constitutes violation or gender violence, are enshrined from many legally binding documents. Below are some of the most fundamental.

At a European level, the European Convention on Human Rights explicitly states the prohibition of all forms of discrimination mentioning specifically discrimination based on the ground of sex. The articles of the Convention that are related to the prohibition of discrimination based, among others, on the sex is the following:

ARTICLE 14

Prohibition of discrimination

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.

Protocol No. 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

ARTICLE 1

General prohibition of discrimination

1. The enjoyment of any right set forth by law shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.
2. No one shall be discriminated against by any public authority on any ground such as those mentioned in paragraph 1.

Also, the Revised European Social Charter explicitly enshrines the prohibition of discrimination based on gender grounds with article E:

Part V Article E – Non-discrimination

The enjoyment of the rights set forth in this Charter shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national extraction or social origin, health, association with a national minority, birth or other status.

At an international level another legally binding instrument for the states, from which respect towards women rights is reinforced, is the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and ratified by Greece in 1983.¹ This Convention provides its member-states with the legal instruments to eliminate discrimination. The articles of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) relating to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in working place is the following:

ARTICLE 11

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:
 - (a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;
 - (b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

¹. UN Treaty Body Database, retrieved from https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=68&Lang=EN

- (c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;
- (d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;
- (e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;
- (f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

- (a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;
- (b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;

². COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 COM/2020/152 final, retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152&from=EN>

- (c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;
- (d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.

Another legally binding document at an international level is the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** that prohibits discrimination on grounds of gender. The article expressly mentioning the prohibition is set out below: Article 26. All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, CANDIDE INTERNATIONAL takes seriously into account the 'Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025' by the EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2020) ² and strongly abides policy objectives and actions to achieve progress on gender equality.

INITIATIVES

- **Bias free interviews regarding gender stereotypes**
 - **INDICATORS:** After all recruitment processes namely, interviews evaluation questionnaires shall be filled out by all candidates. The process should be rated as positive with a minimum of 80% from all participants.
- **Inclusion of more projects that are promoting gender equality**
 - **INDICATORS:** At least 10% of upcoming initiatives shall be based on gender equality directly or indirectly.
- **Organization of seminars and trainings on gender equality issues for the personnel (at least two annually)**
 - **INDICATORS:** At least two annual trainings/seminars shall be organized for the awareness raising of the personnel on gender equality issues. Attending at least one of the events shall be mandatory for each employee and for the members of the managing board.
- **Organization of trainings for the capacity building of the women employee based on their learning needs.**
 - **INDICATORS:** Research on each employee's educational needs. Fulfillment of at least 40% of the identified gaps after the completion of the training/seminars.
- **Participation in national awareness events that support women empowerment**
 - **INDICATORS:** At least one participation per year for all staff and members of board.

CONCLUSION

Among CANDIDE INETRATIONAL's core values is trust and respect. Diversity is appreciated and honored and thus, no space for any form of discrimination is accepted. Therefore, the already existed equal respect with which all CANDIDE INETRATIONAL's members are being treated, is now established with this Gender Equality Plan.

CANDIDE INETRATIONAL's Plan, will work towards fostering and enhancing policies that support equal treatment of women in all aspects of professional life. Thus, this Plan wishes to further develop the company's innovative spirit towards applying policies that can enforce social change.

Although Belgium is among the EU members-states that ranks high scores compared to other member-states in relation to women in power, there is always space for improvement and a strong need for businesses to take action towards enhancing their strategies.³

This plan wishes to work as an example of promotion of women rights and support of women empowerment in the business world.

³. EIGE, Index score for Belgium for the 2021 is 72.7%. Retrieved from <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/BE>



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