

State Archives in Belgium

Gender Equality Plan

Introduction

In accordance with the stipulations of the law of 12 January 2007 aimed at overseeing the application of the resolutions of the World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995 and integrating the gender dimension in all federal policies (law on Gender Mainstreaming) as well as the provisions of the Horizon Europe framework programme of the European Commission, the State Archives of Belgium, under the authority of the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO), recognise the need for Gender Equality Plan (GEP). The State Archives also acknowledge that the GEP is an eligibility criterion for any participation in the Horizon Europe programme.

The State Archives, represented by the National Archivist of Belgium, supports this Gender Equality Plan and commits to its implementation according to the terms and conditions stipulated in the present document.

The GEP is based on the framework established by the European Commission that establishes 4 mandatory requirements (“building blocks”) for a GEP and 5 recommended thematic areas. It builds on the works initiated during the legislative period 2014-2019 by the Gender Mainstreaming network established in October 2016 comprising the 10 Federal Scientific Institutions (ESF/FWI) and BELSPO (acronym of the administration overseeing these institutions) and is in line with a series of commitments by the same actors.

Through a combination of its curative, prospective and preventive capacities, the GEP is also linked to the provisions of the anti-discrimination law of 10 May 2007, in particular the “gender law” (11 protected criteria). Under this framework, any form of direct discrimination is not only outlawed but also subject to civil and criminal penalties. The present Plan is therefore designed to combine the preventive approach of the gender mainstreaming law and the curative approach of the anti-discrimination law, and will ensure that specific actions are taken, that is to say actions directed towards women only, in order to establish factual gender equality.

1. Dissemination and commitment

The gender dimension as developed in the present GEP is in accordance with the political commitments taken among other in:

- the [Gender mainstreaming law](#) of 12 January 2007, and the Royal Decree of 26 January 2010 implementing the law,
- the [Federal Coalition Agreement of 2019](#),
- the [policy statement of 2 November 2020](#) of the State Secretary for Science Policy, Thomas Dermine (Chamber of Representatives, Doc 55 1610/016),
- the general policy note of the State Secretary for Science Policy of 30 November 2021,
- the [Federal Gender Mainstreaming Plan](#) adopted by the Council of Ministers on 11 June 2021,
- the [Management Agreement 2016-2018 of the PPS Science Policy](#),
- the [Strategic Plan 2022-2024 of the PPS Science Policy](#),
- the operational plan 2023-2024
- the Inclusive Panels Charter, signed by the State Secretary and the Chairman of the board of Directors of the PPS Science Policy in 2022.

The intersectional approach is one of the tools used to combat multiple and crossed discriminations, among others through

- the [Istanbul Convention](#) (entered into force after on 1 July 2016 after ratification)

The Gender Equality Plan is public and can be accessed on the website www.arch.be.

Action 1.1. A page dedicated to GEP and gender equality will be created and regularly updated on the State Archives website and intranet.

Cross-references from the intranet to the extranet maintained by Belspo under "customisable cross-cutting policies" have been established.

Action 1.2. To promote better communication, in addition to the intranet, the GEP will be distributed by email to all State Archives staff members.

2. Availability of dedicated structures

Since the law of 12 January 2007 and its corresponding implementation decree were enacted, the administration is legally obligated to integrate the gender dimension in all its structures and actions.

Within the State Archives, a contact person was appointed in September 2016 and reconfirmed in June 2022.

This contact person is in charge of the exchanges between the State Archives and the Gender-Equality-Diversity network of BELSPO.

The contact person is Stéphanie Deschamps (stephanie.deschamps@arch.be).

This person is thus the internal consultant for these issues; she can rely on the support of others in order to benefit from additional competences and resources, and to make her mission accomplishable.

Action 2.1. Disposing of a network of contact persons Gender-Equality-Diversity to ensure the follow-up and proper implementation of the commitments of the minister in terms of gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities at the State Archives in order to have a coherent approach (good governance).

Action 2.2. Ensuring the representation of the State Archives within the Gender-Equality-Diversity network of BELSPO.

3. Data collection and follow-up

The human resources service (HR) of the State Archives provides gender-specific data about its staff (see P&O BELSPO) with a view to a future monitoring by qualification and status (administrative and scientific career, contractual and statutory personnel, etc.). As a federal administration, the State Archives are subject to language laws which have primacy (because of “public order”). At the same time, the distribution of job positions is being pursued with the utmost respect for gender parity.

Action 3.1. If necessary and in consultation with BOSA (FPS Policy & Support), complementing the gender information contained in the staff data base managed by PersoPoint.

Action 3.2. Collecting anonymised data about all staff members, sorted by sex and gender, and analysing them in compliance with the GDPR (aggregate data). This action and analysis is carried out by the human resources service (HR) of the State Archives.

Action 3.3. Making gender-specific data about all staff members available on the intranet to the whole staff, which are updated annually by the human resources service (HR) in compliance with the GDPR.

Action 3.4. Disseminating the conclusions of the data analyses with regard to gender equality of State Archives staff by grade, career type (administrative/scientific), status (contractual/statutory), employment (full-time or part-time) and age group, and including them in the annual report of the State Archives. These conclusions are also presented by the human resources services (HR) to the basic consultation committee (CCB/BOC). As of 2023, they shall be included in the annual report about the social responsibility of the organisation of the PPS Science Policy.

4. Awareness-raising and training

Awareness about gender equality is a key dimension for understanding and rectifying discriminations, stereotypes and other prejudices that can burden the work environment and negatively impact women's careers.

The supervisory administration BELSPO organises several events per year aimed at raising awareness by addressing different target audiences of BELSPO's and Federal Scientific Institutions' (ESF/FWI) staff members: training days for contact persons and for all or some personnel of the reporting lines, meetings with experts, cultural events, calls for projects, etc. The main objective is to encourage interactions and exchanges between participants within a considerate learning environment that is usually mixed-gender (non-mixed training giving women the opportunity to express themselves more freely are also possible). The goal of this change of organisational culture is to develop an inclusive organisation.

The aim is also to raise awareness among the teams that organise the public events of the State Archives or that are confronted in their daily activities with negative gender stereotypes and clichés that generate or encourage gender assignments.

Action 4.1. Proposing training to the State Archives staff members about the prevention of indirect discrimination and the prohibition of direct discrimination induced by the gender equality and equal opportunities. The latter allows for positive actions, especially in favour of women.

Action 4.2. Informing the State Archives staff members about events of general nature or catered to specific groups or topics that are organised by BELSPO or by FPS Strategy & Support (BOSA) and aimed at promoting an open view free of negative clichés and stereotypes, and encouraging members to take part in these events.

Action 4.3. Seeing to it that the gender dimension is integrated in external communication (website, social media, newsletter, etc.) and in service to the public. It is recommended to use special days or commemorations (for example the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the International Women's Rights Day, etc.) for targeted communication. The head of the communication service is in charge of coordination.

5. Work-life balance

The human resources service (HR) has gender-specific data about the staff members at its disposal regarding part-time work, parental leave, telework etc. and more generally about working time arrangements.

As a federal scientific institution, the State Archives is bound by a specific legal framework. This legal basis determines the scope of action of the State Archives with regard to the working time arrangements of its staff members.

In this matter, the State Archives also ensures the application of article 1 of the law of 22 July 1993 about “certain measures regarding the public service” that establishes a “right to disconnect”, and the circular of 20 December 2021 specifying its implementation.

This legal framework applies always and everywhere the principle of equality and every collaborator can invoke it regardless of his or her gender. The State Archives commits itself to spreading this information among its staff members. A balance between the private life and work

life of the staff members shall always be sought, in particular to accommodate single-parent families, blended families, or families whose children have alternating custody.

Action 5.1. Annually publishing on the intranet the aggregate and brief data about the working time arrangements of the State Archives staff members in compliance with the GDPR. These aggregate data are gathered and transmitted by the human resources service (HR) of the State Archives and also presented by this service to the basic consultation committee (CCB/BOC).

Action 5.2. Identifying possible imbalances in the working time arrangements of State Archives staff members, determining their cause and suggesting proposals, if possible, to remedy them (reasonable working hours adjustments in order to accommodate different parental situations, for example). This action is carried out by the human resources service (HR) and the risk prevention manager of the State Archives.

6. More gender balance in senior scientific positions

The State Archives pays constant attention to gender balance in decision-making positions (from middle management to senior executives).

Action 6.1. Identifying imbalances in gender representation in decision-making positions and recommending ways of rectifying them. This action is carried out by the human resources service (HR) of the State Archives and the results of this analysis are transmitted by this service to the supervisory administration in charge (BELSPO, SELOR etc.) so that it can make the necessary changes within its remit. Notwithstanding this, it is incumbent on the National Archives of Belgium to take positive action to remedy these imbalances.

Action 6.2. Taking into account the quantitative analysis of human resources, striving to promote applications from and recruitment of more diverse profiles in decision-making positions, including an intersectional approach.

7. Gender equality in recruitment and career development

As with the two previous points, the State Archives is bound, as a federal scientific institution, by a specific legal framework.

BELSPO is certified (by FPS BOSA/SELOR) to compose recruitment panels and acts in partnership with the State Archives for scientific, administrative and technical recruitments. This certification includes diversity and anti-discrimination training for the human resources service (HR). Recruitment is carried out in accordance with the language laws via SELOR that applies its [gender policy](#), which is also integrated in BELSPO's approach to recruitments.

The State Archives is obliged to ensure gender balance among the members of scientific panels when recruiting scientific staff.

Action 7.1. Stimulating a gender-balanced composition of scientific panels by broadening the recruitment criteria (for example to other grades) and by providing formal reasons for the composition of the panel in the recruitment report. In addition, the attention of the panel members is systematically drawn to the importance of gender mainstreaming (preventing the reproduction of gender biases, in particular).

8. Gender mainstreaming in research projects

Gender mainstreaming is explicitly foreseen in the multi-annual programme for the funding of research and projects by BELSPO. This ranges from the strict balance in advisory committees to the integration of the gender dimension in proposals and in their evaluation. Furthermore, specific attention was given to the composition of expert panels and experts, for which gendered reading tools are being prepared.

Action 8.1. Ensuring that the members of the different panels of the State Archives are aware of the gender dimension and integrate it in each step of the recruitment procedure.

9. Measures against gender-based harassment and other types of transgressive behaviour

All federal administrations and institutions are required to comply with the legal framework against harassment (defined by the [code on well-being at work](#)) of any type and regardless of who is the victim and who is the harasser. Notwithstanding this, the National Archives of Belgium,

taking into account the Istanbul Convention, is aware that women are more often the victims of sexual harassment in the workspace. Attention to the organisational culture is therefore necessary and work regulations must unequivocally crack down on any acts that may harm the psychological and physical balance of female collaborators (and transgender persons).

The State Archives, just as the other federal scientific institutions (ESF/FWI), has designated persons of confidence. They have been trained and are obliged to annually take a mandatory “refresher training”, in collaboration with [EMPREVA](#), the central unit of the common internal service for prevention and protection at work of the Belgian federal public administration.

The persons of confidence, trainings, refresher trainings are monitored (through the risk prevention manager) by [EMPREVA](#).

The actions of EMPREVA go beyond the issue of harassment and address the well-being of workers in a global approach.

All activities with regard to psycho-social risks (including harassment) are subject to double reporting, on the one hand by the internal service for prevention and protection at work, and on the other hand by the external service for prevention and protection ([Cohezio](#)). Annual reports are available that contain general statistics about the cases treated by the persons of confidence.

In addition to Empreva and Cohezio, which are privileged partners, it is also possible to benefit from the participation of local associations specialised in these issues in order to organise events or to set up a prevention campaign.

The types of reports of gender-based discrimination, which are collected by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (IEFH/IVGM), are also taken into account.

Action 9.1. Hanging placards with key information in transit areas of all State Archives repositories in order to maintain awareness. This action is carried out by the risk prevention manager of the State Archives.

Action 9.2. Taking advantage of specific occasions (for example the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to raise awareness among the staff members about the issue (upon initiative of the Gender-Equality-Diversity network of BELSPO).

Action 9.3. Communicating key information by e-mail and via intranet with regard to harassment of any type, including gender-based harassment, in order to maintain awareness. This action is carried out by the risk prevention manager of the State Archives.

Action 9.4. If a complaint for gender-based intimidation or another type of transgressive behaviour is deemed admissible, the employer sees to it that a safe working environment is established for the victim, for the workers who defended the protected person or testified formally or informally in the person's favour, and that the necessary psycho-social support is put in place in consultation with the victim, the person of confidence, the risk prevention manager and EMPREVA.