

D8.2 – Gender Equality Plan

Project Information

Grant Agreement Number	101058459
Project Full Title	Customizable AI-based in-line process monitoring platform for achieving zero-defect manufacturing in the PV industry
Project Acronym	Platform-ZERO
Funding scheme	IA
Start date of the project	1 st January 2023
Duration	48 Months
Project Coordinator	Victor Izquierdo Roca (IREC)
Project Website	https://www.platform-zero-project.eu

Deliverable Information

Deliverable n°	30											
Deliverable title	Gender Equality Plan											
Partner no.	1	2	3	4	4.1	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Part. Short name	IREC	AIT	ZSW	R2M-IT	R2M-FR	LUR	SUN	LENZ	RISC	HZB	UPO	SAU
Deliverable Leader	✓											
Contributing Partners	✓											
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Contractual Deadline	31-March-2023											
Delivery date to EC	28-March-2023											

Dissemination Level

PU	Public – Fully open (automatically posted online)	✓
SEN	Sensitive – Limited under the conditions of the Grant Agreement	

Document Log

Version	Date	Description of Change
V1.0	15/03/2023	First draft
V1.1	23/03/2023	Inputs from partners
V2.0	28/03/2023	Final version

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1 Deliverable description

Plan to ensure that the Platform-ZERO project takes into account gender equality during its development.

2 Executive Summary

Platform-ZERO has a strong commitment towards gender equality. This deliverable describes the different actions that are proposed for the promotion of the involvement of women in Science and Technology in the frame of the Platform-ZERO project. This includes the definition of a Platform-ZERO recruitment strategy aiming towards a gender-balanced composition of the research teams at all levels.

3 Introduction

The EU is strongly committed to promoting gender equality in research and innovation within the Horizon Europe framework. In this sense, Platform-ZERO is aligned with this commitment and recognizes the gender inequality that the structural and systemic biases originate in the research and innovation system. In order to fulfil this commitment, Platform-ZERO will implement a series of administrative, policy and educational measures to diminish these gender biases in research and innovation.

In particular, the following objectives will be pursued throughout the project:

- ✓ To encourage the participation of female scientist at all stages of research careers in the Platform-Zero project
- ✓ Ensuring the gender balance in decision making, by equal male and female representation

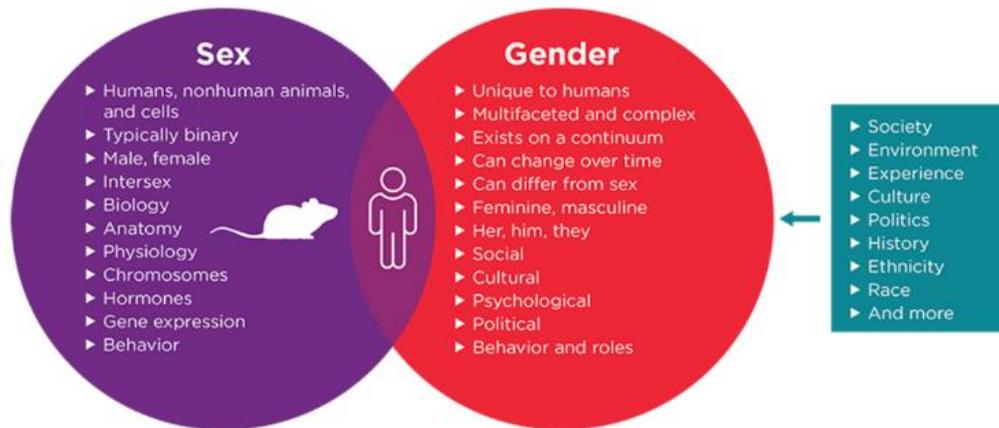
To reach these particular objectives, Platform -ZERO will ensure equal opportunities for males and females by ensuring a fair treatment of evaluation and selection.

4 Preliminary Considerations and Definitions

4.1 Sex & Gender

Distinguishing between sex and gender is crucial, as it allows for a more nuanced understanding of gendered power relations and gender inequalities. First, sex refers to the biological differences between women and men based on primary and secondary sexual characteristics¹. It is important to note however, that while biological sex is often understood as the biological condition of being either ‘male’ or ‘female’ – implying a binary – this is not necessarily the case (e.g. intersex individuals).

On the other hand, gender refers to the socially constructed, historically, culturally, and spatially specific meaning attached to the perceived binary distinction between the sexes; in other words ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’¹. Contrary to popular perception, gender does not describe binary categories, but has to be seen as fluid. Understanding gender as “something fluid, something continuously changing, not an inherent characteristic of a person”² helps question the power structures underlying our societies.

Figure 1. Comparison of Sex vs. Gender³

4.2 Gender Equality

Gender equality means different things to different people and can thus be interpreted in many different ways. Commonly, a distinction is made between three different approaches. Gender Equality can refer to making women equal to men (sameness-approach), it can focus on highlighting women as a separate group with inherent qualities that need to be supported (difference approach). But gender equality can also refer to changing the way gender influences our society by transforming gender relations and cultures, thus inherently changing the status quo (transformative-approach)⁴. The first approach, focusing on making women equal to men, does not satisfy these aims, as the dimension of biases and imbalanced power relations is not considered. The second does not provide a good fit either. While measures supporting women as a ‘group’ certainly are an important aspect of counteracting present and past structural inequalities, emphasizing women’s difference comes with the risk of further stereotypes.

It follows that a transformative approach and understanding of gender equality, targeting culture and practices as a way to achieve the needed transformation within the field, is the most valuable approach. Moreover, it allows us to question the underlying dynamics hindering women in their career progressions, enabling a more holistic approach to gender equality.

5 Platform-ZERO-Fields of Action

The promotion of gender equality within the Consortium is a strong commitment of the teams involved in the project, complementary to the existing GEPs of each partner institution. Gender equality in Platform-ZERO is in line with the strategy of Horizon Europe. In particular, the following objectives are pursued:

- ✓ Integrating, if necessary, the gender dimension in research and innovation (R&I) activities
- ✓ Searching for gender balance in decision-making processes.

Enrolment of more women in these bodies will be promoted during the duration of the project, to promote a more gender-balanced composition.

- ✓ Fostering gender balance in innovation and research teams, in order to close the gaps in the participation of women, aiding on the definition of a recruitment strategy for the Platform-ZERO partners lacking an institutional GEP;

These objectives underpin the European Commission determination to implement gender equality in Horizon Europe actions at each stage of the research and innovation cycle.



5.1 Gender Dimension

Regarding the orientation of the project, the technologies developed inside the project won't be focused on a specific gender fully satisfying the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 of the EU commission⁵. Thus, as Platform-ZERO will not apply research with humans, animals or any material originating from humans or animals (e.g. organs, cells, tissues, etc.), the gender dimension in terms of anatomical and physiological differences, is not directly relevant for the development of the main project tasks. However, the design of demonstration prototypes will consider these differences (mainly anatomical) in terms of feasibility of handling the facilities, equipment, raw materials and final product. In this context, there is no foreseen gender dimension to be taken into account in the research and innovation activities of the project.

5.2 Measures for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities

5.2.1 Gender Balance in the Decision-Making Processes

During the proposal submission level already >30% of women were actively involved in the Platform-ZERO, which exceeds the typical representation of women in the technical sciences. At this point of the project, the active participation of women is foreseen by including more women in the decision-making processes, being part of the Exploitation and Innovation Board and in the Advisory Board, still to be defined. In this sense, Platform-ZERO will encourage equal gender representation in the decision-making processes.

5.2.2 Composition of the Team

The last “She Figures 2021” published by European Commission⁶ shows the clear dominance of men representation in R&D and Innovation, and according to the last communication of the UNESCO²⁴⁷ the fast development of AI based technologies may also contribute about increasing of this gap between women and men implication in different aspects of human life. In this context the partners of the project will make a special effort to promote gender balance at all levels in their teams, including management structures and research groups, following the recommendations proposed by Heidari⁸. Thus, Platform-ZERO aims at addressing the European Research Areas goals of resolving implicit biases and removing barriers to the access of women to scientific and technological careers.

In this sense, care was taken to ensure a balanced number of women and men involved throughout the consortium as well as an equal distribution of scientific competencies, hierarchical positions and project hours. In the task distribution, care was also taken to ensure that women and men were not entrusted with gender-typical tasks.

In addition, a specific measure regarding recruitment of the team will be addressed:

Platform-ZERO recruitment strategy will be fully complied with the European Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers⁹. The selection procedure will be transparent, efficient and open to candidates of any gender, race and nationality. In case of equivalent CVs, women candidates should be prioritized to fulfil gender balance in the research teams. Vacancy descriptions will be made avoiding the use of gender discriminatory terms, ensuring a gender-neutral formulation of the positions. To enhance the participation of female candidates, the announcement of the positions can target specific groups devoted to the promotion of women in science and engineering, like the “IEEE Women in Engineering” and the “European Platform of Women Scientists”, and any other additional groups identified at the beginning of the project. When possible (depending on the internal rules and procedures of the different partners), and to minimize the risk of gender biased issues in the selection procedure, the selection of the candidates should be made by gender-balanced selection committees.

5.2.3 Involvement of the Researchers in the GEPs activities

The GEPs of the Consortium institutions plans include the development of different kinds of specific actions and activities, such as the organization of Training Activities in Gender issues (with participation of



researchers in Gender Seminars analysing the gender dimension in RTD projects and Research Institutes), and the evaluation of the perception by the workers of the equality of opportunities in the institution. WP leaders and team leaders at the different institutions should promote active participation of the Platform-ZERO researchers in the GEPs of their respective institutions. Specifically, the following measures will be considered by the consortium during the execution of the project:

- ✓ Above all, flexible working hours and teleworking arrangements for project workers ensure that people with care responsibilities can participate in the project without any disadvantages.
- ✓ Academic partners of the project, having an easy access to schools and universities, will take this opportunity to present the Platform-ZERO project and its results to girls and women with specific focus on the benefits of working in R&D and high-tech areas.
- ✓ Industrial partners of the project will organize specific forums and/or workshop with the goal of promoting the role of women in engineering professions. This also includes events such as "Daughter Day" or "Women in Technology", to encourage young women to take technical or scientific training paths.
- ✓ The project also aims to support female master / PhD students and interns (e.g. FemTech internships).
- ✓ The consortium participants have agreed to use gender-neutral language for external project communication.

In this sense, the exemplary measures and instruments listed in the table below should be applied by each beneficiary in line with their internal and National regulations:

Table 1. Measures and Instruments for Gender Equality (Source: IREC)

Structural and Integration Policies		
Policies	Monitoring	Gender Composition
1. Compliance with National Regulations	1. Evaluation of HR policies	1. Ensuring that all bodies are gender-sensitive and aware
2. Internal Gender Equality Plans	2. Evaluation of organizational culture	
3. Presence of labour unions & HR representatives	3. Employee surveys & gender statistics	
Flexibility, Time and Work Life		
Work-Life Balance (WLB)	Care & Family Life	
1. Reasonable working hours, limited overtime	1. Parental leaves: "father quota"	
2. Move key meetings to core hours (family responsibilities)	2. Parent-friendly workplaces	
3. Equal treatment of part-time positions	3. Non-discrimination of parents	
4. Flexible schedules		
5. Avoidance of "Old-boys clubs"		
Presence and Visibility		
1. Gender-sensitive language		
Men and women as contributors of collaborative works/papers		
3. Equal treatment of part-time work		
4. Career and life planning		

6 References



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- 1 Humbert, Ivaškaitė-Tamošiūnė, Oetke & Paats, 2015, p. 8
 - 2 Danielsson, 2012, p. 27
 - 3 <https://www.taconic.com/taconic-insights/quality/sex-vs-gender-preclinical-research.html>
 - 4 Rees, 2006; Verloo & Lombardo, 2007; Munday, 2009
 - 5 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>
 - 6 <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-law-and-publications/publication-detail/-/publication/61564e1f-d55e-11eb-895a-01aa75ed71a1>
 - 7 Communication of the UNESCO [<https://en.unesco.org/AI-and-GE-2020>]
 - 8 Sex and Gender Equity in Research: rationale for the SAGER guidelines and recommended use (DOI 10.1186/s41073-016-0007-6)
 - 9 https://www.esf.org/fileadmin/user_upload/esf/1-European_Charter_Researches.pdf