



# GENDER ACTION PLAN

PCN Materials pc

## Introduction

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) was prepared by PCN Materials (a spin-off of FORTH) and concerns the company as a whole. The proposed actions presented in the Plan were inspired by the EU Strategy, policy objectives and actions to make a significant contribution towards a **gender-equal Europe**.

The promotion of gender equality in businesses is an issue of high interest for the European Commission, as it contributes to the social/economic standing of all employees and women in particular. It has become apparent that by restricting the pool of knowledge and brightest minds mainly to one gender (men), the outcomes of effective business, will be less than it could be. Therefore, it only makes sense to ensure that particularly a small start-up like PCN Materials does not lose minds with high potential due to structural obstacles and gender bias.

The contribution of women in small businesses' developments - that in turn influence society - could bring out different findings and results as well as different points of view. By taking different points of view into consideration we achieve better business results and we further contribute to the development of an all-inclusive society. Finally, it is a democratic principle that, power and influence should be distributed equally among different groups in a society. For this reason we should make sure that equal opportunities are indeed provided in all sectors of businesses and the society. The elimination of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, race, ect should remain a priority within our small business unit

The proposed Gender Action Plan was adopted by the company directors and its official initiation date was Oct. 1, 2023 following about 6 months internal discussions that lead to its present formulation.

## Evaluating the present situation of PCN Materials in terms of gender equality

A diagnosis on the current situation regarding gender (women's participation and gender aspects in the business) is the first important step to ensure that proposed actions are realistic, practical and to the point. The most obvious indication of gender gaps is found in inconsistencies in the number of women and men occupied in the different ranks and positions available within the company.

1. Available online at: <https://pcnmaterials.com/>

Thus, according to company culture, the first most important step to be taken is to search the inequalities in numbers. Then, it becomes easier to look deeper into the problems and inconsistencies identified. Setting up the plan, the management followed statistical data such as:

- The number of women and men holding research positions and degree
- The ratio of employees per sex in other positions (technical and administrative staff)

From the data we have so far it becomes evident that there is an absence of women in leadership and administration positions. However, the present data suggest that **women enjoy a truly equal opportunity position (50% of the total employees).**

### **Recommended Actions**

Nevertheless, and according to the **GenSET consensus report** <sup>(1)</sup>, PCN Materials adopted the following recommendations for change in line with the four dimensions: a. knowledge making, b. human capital, c. practices and processes, d. regulation and compliance

#### **a. Knowledge making:**

Leaders must be convinced about the importance of the gender-dimension within knowledge making and the need to incorporate methods of sex and gender analysis into basic and applied research. The most effective way of doing this will be to illustrate how continually incorporating sex and gender analysis promotes research excellence with examples available in European institutions (e.g. DG Research, ESF) and made available to institutional "change agents" (e.g. deans, provosts, opinion makers, department heads). In particular, R&D employees with a strong scientific background, should be trained in using methods of sex and gender analysis. Both managerial levels and researchers should be educated in such sex and gender analysis. Training in methods in sex and gender analysis should be integrated into all subjects across all basic and applied science curricula. In all assessments — paper selection for journals, appointments and promotions of individuals, grant reviews, etc. — the use and knowledge of methods for sex and gender analysis in research must be an explicit topic for consideration.

#### **b. Human capital:**

Research teams, particularly within the R&D activities, should be gender diverse. Management should promote gender diversity of research teams through a variety of incentives (e.g. quality recognition and allocation of resources) and through transparency in hiring.

1. Available online at: <https://pcnmaterials.com/>



Women already within the R&D must be made more visible. All public relations regarding company activities should be gender- proofed (represent women appropriately). This could be done by including women in all promotional activities such as exhibitions and campaigns for scientific careers, by leaders nominating women for prizes, and by recognizing women's achievements appropriately.

Gender balancing efforts should be made in all committees, with priority given to key decision-making committees. Panels for selection of grants and applicants must be gender diverse. This must be the goal for management teams as well. The company is committed to seek and improve the quality of their leadership by creating awareness, understanding, and appreciation of different management styles. This can be achieved through training, self-reflection, and various feedback mechanisms. Diversity training, specifically, is essential in this process.

### **c. Practices and Processes:**

Assessment procedures must be re-defined to focus on the quality, rather than quantity, of individuals' work output. This must be consistently applied in individual, departmental, and other levels of assessment.

Persons with disproportionate committee and administrative duties should be provided with additional support staff or adjust work assignments.

Policies and procedures specifically affecting working conditions that differentially impact men and women in businesses must be reviewed and revised, ensuring positive benefits for personal and professional development for both men and women. Revisions are needed in:

- # implementing maternity and paternity leave policies at the institutional level,
- # procedures for dual-career couples that specifically target increasing mobility of worker by supporting partners in finding suitable employment in the same region (taking care to avoid nepotism),
- # company strategies for careers developed later in life (e.g. maintaining contact with individuals taking career breaks; providing grant opportunities for individuals at critical career/life moments and returners), and
- # awareness regarding salary negotiation tactics (through, for instance, targeted workshops and training for women)

Specific strategies should be employed for attracting women to apply for top positions. Announcements for recruitment should be formulated so that they encourage women to apply.



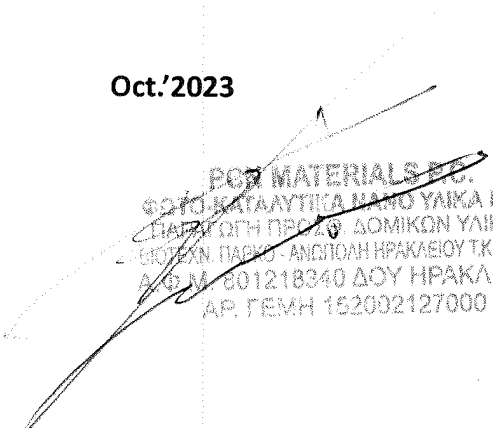
That is, announcements should be broad, rather than narrowly focused. Job criteria for employment should be objective and transparent. Additionally, leaders should not just rely on self-initiated promotion but also encourage and promote applications, not just accept them. Finally, if there are no women in the applicant pool, the positions should be readvertised.

#### **d. Regulation and Compliance:**

Explicit targets to improve gender balance and action plans to reach them must be included in the overarching gender strategy of the company operations. The progress must subsequently be regularly monitored and be made public.

Gender issues must be an integral part of internal and external evaluation of the management. Policies at all levels must require this inclusion. This should begin with a critical review of gender mainstreaming processes within each company activity, identifying current successes and failures. A member of the leadership team should be responsible for gender-related issues, such as following up on the gender action strategy for the company.

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