

Gender Equality Plan

2023-2025

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Introduction

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) of Proplast is a strategic document that identifies and defines a plan for the promotion of equal opportunities and inclusion within the consortium. The plan is in continuity with recent national and European regulations and practices aimed at ensuring full participation and enhancement of human resources and at improving the quality of research and innovation through the introduction of a gender perspective.

Furthermore, the GEP is the access requirement demanded by the European Commission for participation in all Horizon Europe projects, the European Union's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation in the period 2021-2027¹ for all organisations wishing to access funds by submitting research projects and, more recently, the GEP is also required for accessing funding from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) programmes.

The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 explicitly mentions the need to take measures to reduce the gender gap in the different research fields, as well as the introduction of a gender perspective at all stages of policy-making, enabling the identification of specific needs and responding to them in a more timely and effective manner. According to the definition of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), GEPs are an operational tool for the implementation of policies that integrate the gender perspective in scientific organisations.

In line with the methodologies of the *Gender Equality in Academia and Research* (GEAR)² tool and the approach developed within the European TARGET project³, the design of the Plan was structured on an initial Audit phase that investigated the levels of gender equality and inclusion existing in the organisation, which then informed the articulation of priorities and measures to be implemented to activate a cultural change in favour of equity and diversity.

The plan consists of 16 specific objectives and 27 actions planned over 2 years -from July 2023 to June 2025- through the deployment of specific resources.

During its implementation period, progressive progress will be monitored and results analysed through a number of indicators set up for *in itinere* and *ex post* evaluation.

¹ European Commission 2021), Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans. Available at this link: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffcb06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-232129669>

² The Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) tool, published in October 2016 by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), and available in the 23 languages of the European Union, aims to provide universities and research organisations with practical tools for achieving different gender equality goals at all stages of organisational change implementation, from the creation of a Gender Equality Plan to the evaluation of its actual impact. Further information is available at this link: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-academia-and-research-gear-tool>

³ TARGET is a Horizon 2020-funded project that contributes to the advancement of gender equality in research and innovation in seven innovative gender equality institutions in the Mediterranean region - including organisations that develop research, fund research and a network of universities. More information on the project can be found at this link: <http://www.gendertarget.eu/>

Methodology

The construction of this Gender Equality Plan, which began in August 2022, benefited from a 10-month planning process. In particular, the figures of Rosalba Mancino and Giuseppe Augugliaro, members of the top management, through the facilitation of the FGB group of consultants, facilitated the emergence of needs, the design of activities to be implemented and the identification of procedures for the approval of the GEP.

The methodologies and tools used for Proplast's GEP were inspired by various Italian and European projects that involved numerous organisations working in research and innovation, particularly in science and technology.

Specifically, the Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) toolkit of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the approach developed within the TARGET project, of which Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini Srl SB (FGB) is a partner, were sources of inspiration for the GEP.

Consistent with this approach, FGB facilitated the definition of Proplast's GEP through the direct involvement of members of management for the construction and sharing of a gender sensitive perspective in the organisation and its activities.

The objectives of this Plan emerged from an initial gender auditing phase in which gender-disaggregated data were collected and analysed to identify the areas with the greatest urgency for action.

The following pages present the results, updated to 30 August 2022, of the gender audit through both quantitative and qualitative analyses. This is followed by a detailed presentation of the plan's **objectives** and **actions**.

Proplast - Plastics Innovation Pole

The **Consorzio per la promozione della cultura plastica** (Proplast) is a composite entity and a reference point for the realisation and promotion of innovative solutions in the plastics sector. It brings, at the moment, together 200 members approximately including companies (polymer producers, machinery manufacturers, processing companies and training organisations), sector associations and universities.

Proplast is a European centre of excellence in Research and Development that is also recognised as a Cluster of companies and research organisations belonging to the polymer and composites industrial chain; it is co-manager of the Piedmont Region's Green Chemistry Innovation Pole and is a consultancy company (**Plastics Academy**) that selects, trains and develops human resources specialised in the plastics sector.

In particular, the technical services cover all the phases necessary for the realisation of complete projects and products, divided into 3 areas:

1. **Materials engineering:** Applied research and consultancy activities in support of technological and industrial development (e.g. quality, chemical, rheological testing of plastic materials and articles);
2. **Process engineering:** Consultancy and specialised services to support companies in solving problems and achieving the highest quality and performance standards, through mould and material testing, optimisation of the production process and equipment;
3. **Product Engineering:** Consulting and applied services for design, simulation and prototyping of polymeric artefacts.

Moreover, Proplast's network is made up of companies, universities and research organisations with which it participates in research and innovation projects financed by regional, national and European funds (e.g. H2020, Piedmont Region, Ministries). Currently, one of the key issues in the industrial world is eco-sustainability, i.e. the adoption of a sustainable development model. Proplast has several active projects in this regard, including: bioplastics, polymers for green applications, polymers for the renewable energy sector, valorisation of recycled plastics and industrial waste.

Gender Equality in Proplast

The Gender Auditing phase first involved the collection and analysis of quantitative data held by Proplast. This was essential for assessing the state of the art on diversity and inclusion in the organisation and preparatory to the identification of objectives and the elaboration of Plan activities.

On the following pages the main results of the survey will be presented.

The data presented are all meant to be disaggregated by gender and updated to August 2022, except for the data on work-life balance (WLB) measures, which refer to the year 2021.

The staff in Proplast

Proplast is a small organisation, with a staff of 44 people.

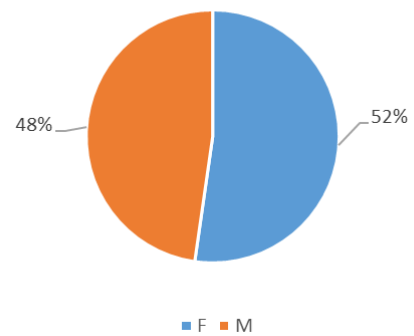
An initial observation at the aggregate level of personnel in the organisation reveals an almost equal gender balance: women make up 52% of personnel, while men make up 48%.

In order to get a more detailed demographic picture, the average age of the aggregate staff was calculated (42 years), then disaggregated by age group and gender, and a distribution on educational qualifications was created.

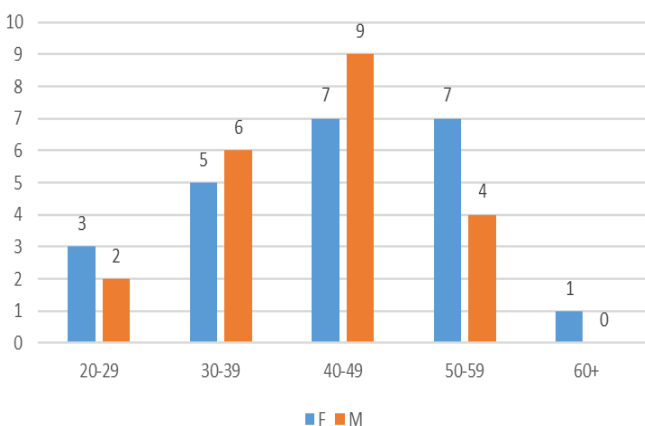
In general, the breakdown by age and gender does not show any particular gaps.

Looking at the distribution by educational qualification and gender, it is, however, significant to note the clear prevalence of women (73%) in the highest educational qualification (university degree) and the exclusively male presence in the lowest educational qualification (middle school diploma). In general, what is noticeable is an inverse gender trend: men decrease as the level of education increases, while women are concentrated in the higher levels and absent in the lower ones.

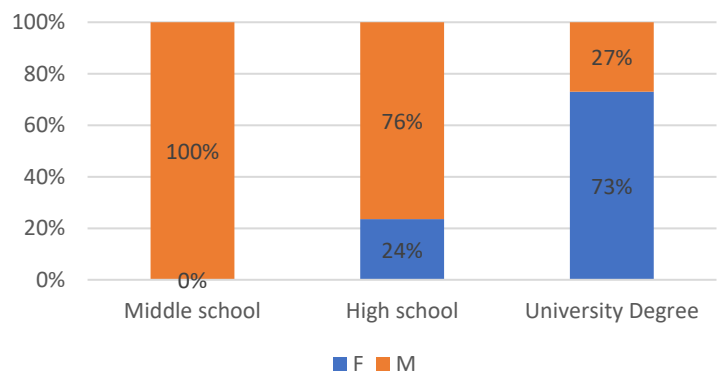
Staff in Proplast, % by gender



Proplast staff, units by age and gender



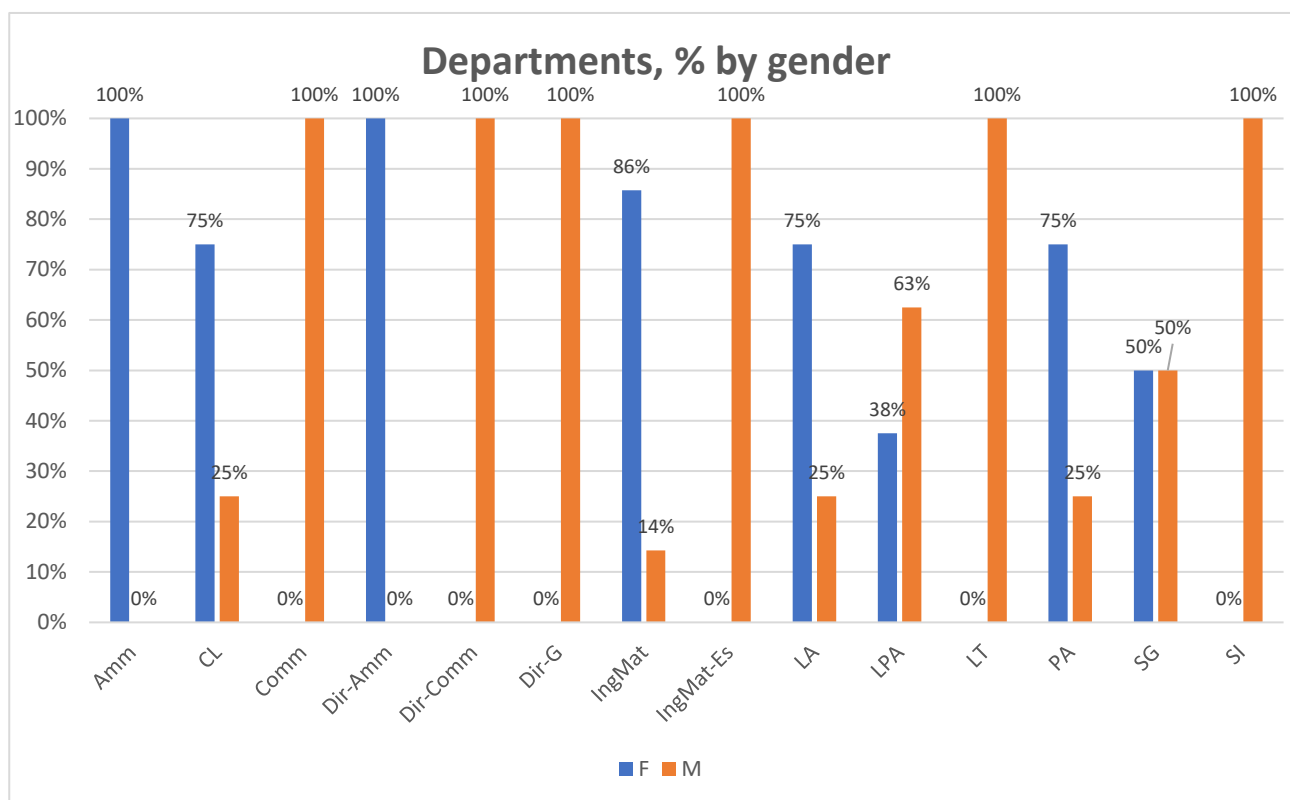
Educational qualification, % by gender



Proplast Departments

Proplast consists of four main cores: Administration, Sales, Training and Engineering Services.

The following graph shows the gender distribution in the various departments.



While a good gender balance can be observed in some departments, including General Services (SG) and the Laboratory for Advanced Planning (LPA), in others some significant gender gaps can be observed.

The data show a clear **male concentration** in the Sales (Comm and Dir-Comm), Extrusion Laboratory (IngMat-Es), Moulding Technology Laboratory (LT) and Information Technology Services (SI) departments. The Extrusion Laboratory works closely with the Materials Engineering Department (IngMat) but is characterised by the use of specific technological equipment.

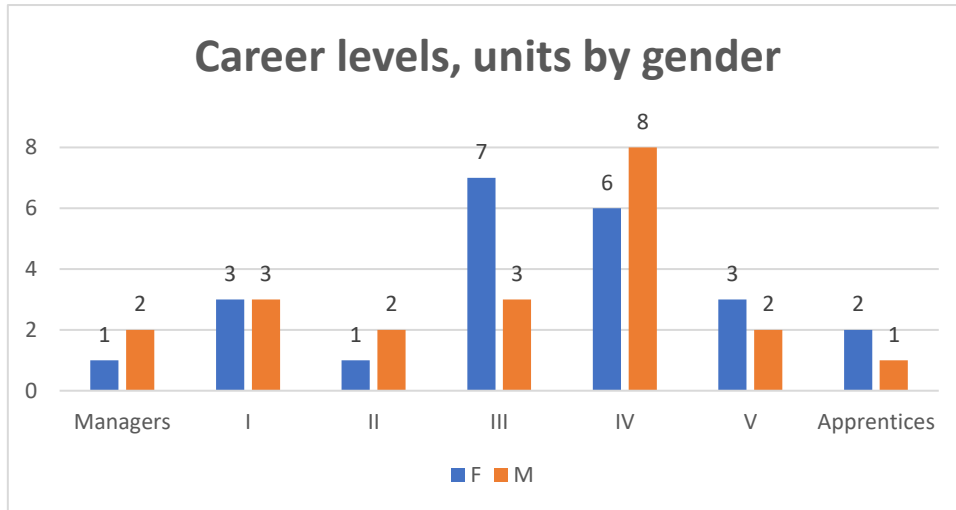
On the other hand, a **female predominance** is present in the departments of Administration (Admin and Dir-Amm), Cluster (CL), Materials Engineering (IngMat), Analysis Laboratory (LA) and Plastics Academy (PA).

Considering the current size of Proplast, these findings do not present an alarming picture, but it remains useful to focus on these trends in order to implement policies to improve gender balance in the various departments. The aim, as extensively specified in the periodic surveys of the She Figures⁴ study, is to reduce the horizontal segregation of women's work and to counteract gender stereotypes linked to different work sectors.

⁴ She Figures reports on gender statistics and indicators in the R&I sector in Europe. The most recent is She Figures 2021, *Gender in research and innovation: statistics and indicators*, available at https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/she-figures-2021_en

Proplast career levels, leadership and remuneration

A further level of detail involved a gender analysis of the classification of employees. The classification indicates the employee's role, duties and responsibilities within the organisation. Each level corresponds to a different economic treatment. Given the small size of the organisation, and to avoid the risk of interpretative bias, it was preferred to report data per unit.

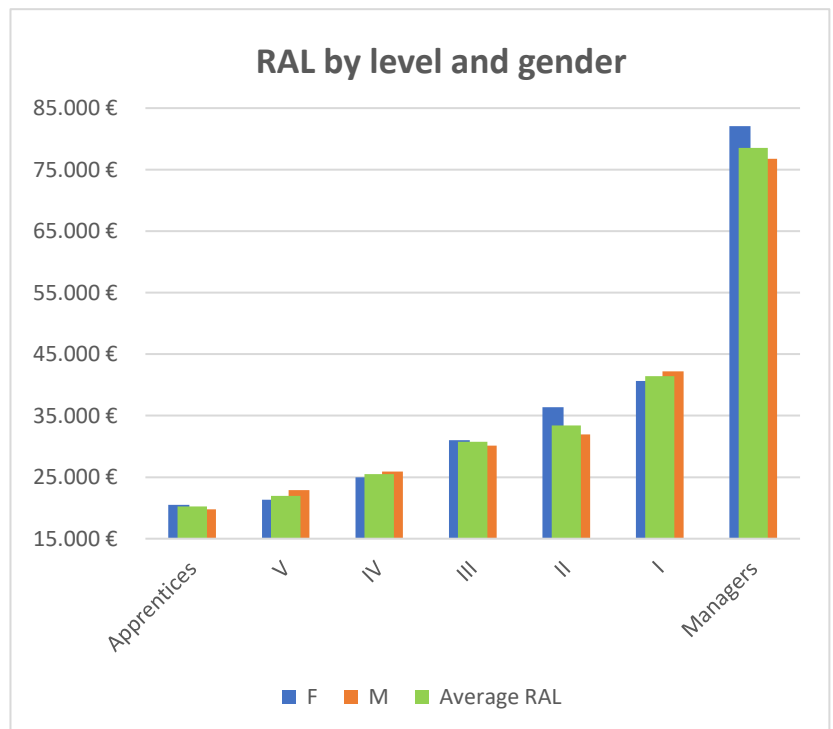


It is clear that the organisation enjoys a general gender balance in the various career levels. With the exception of level III where there is a gap in favour of women of 4 units, in both the highest (middle management) and lowest (apprentice) levels, and in the intermediate levels (II and V) the difference recorded is only one unit and therefore easily modifiable.

In support of this scenario, the salary survey reported no significant differences between the average RAL for each level and the average RAL by gender for each of the levels.

This means that although at the moment there is neither a problem with access to leadership positions for women in Proplast nor a pay gap, it is also true that in the absence of a clear mechanism and transparent procedure that considers gender balance and equity as values to be guaranteed, the situation could be reversed at the next staff renewal.

For these reasons, the proposed gender equality interventions are mainly oriented towards maintaining the balance shown by the data and raising awareness on the one hand about gender stereotypes and on the other hand about the benefits of introducing a gender perspective in research and promoting more diverse and inclusive working environments.



Work-life balance and company benefits

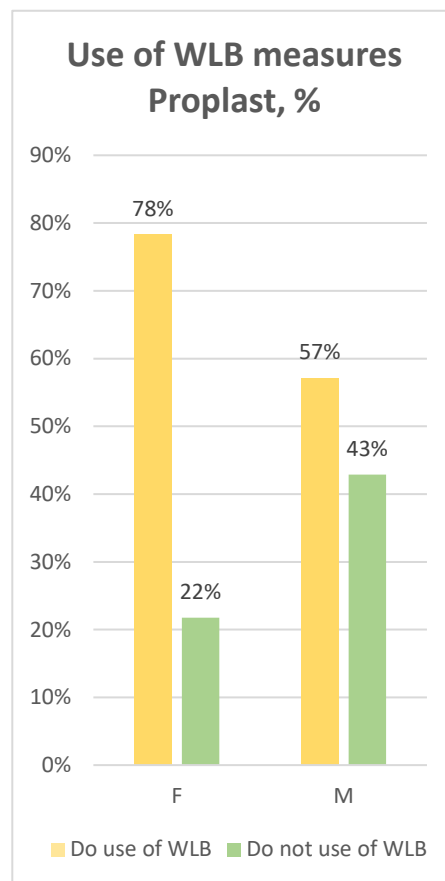
Work-life balance policies are essential to improve staff participation within the organisation. Specifically, measures to facilitate women's involvement are important because of an imbalance in care loads that often sees women more involved, without pay, in caring for dependent persons and that has an impact not only on women's career prospects but also on their psychological and physical health.

The work-life balance (WLB) measures examined are part-time work, parental leave, the law ex 104 and smart-working.

The first consideration to be made is that a large proportion of Proplast staff, regardless of gender, make use of work-life balance measures. In detail, women who make use of conciliation measures make up 78% compared to only 57% of men. This confirms the common and shared need to strengthen and improve reconciliation tools, but also the specific impact that this would have on the female population being the prevalent beneficiary, as the data on the use of part-time and the law 104 show.

It is the intention of this GEP to intervene primarily on smart-working and parental leave measures, especially with a view to post-pandemic reorganisation and adaptation.

Finally, a good and gender-balanced use of certain benefits such as mobile phones and company cars is noted. Extending the accessibility and type of these benefits can contribute to the individual well-being of employees, encouraging their participation within the organisation



WLB measure	F (units)	M (units)
Part-time	2	0
Parental leaves	<i>no request in place - in the past used by both F and M</i>	
Smart working	17	10
law 104	3	0
Benefit (mobile phones, company cars...)	12	11

Qualitative analysis

Gender Auditing involved, in addition to quantitative data collection and analysis, a qualitative assessment of the context to identify the presence or absence of guarantee mechanisms and procedures for promoting or maintaining gender balance and inclusion in the organisation.

Although there has been no formal, structured commitment to gender equality to date, the data suggest a positive trend. However, Proplast does not carry out any documented training and awareness-raising activities aimed at combating gender stereotypes and the resulting unconscious bias. Furthermore, apart from the Declaration *'in accordance with the Framework Agreement on Harassment and Violence in the Workplace'*, there are no explicit policies against sexual and/or gender-based violence and harassment.

Finally, there is no methodology for monitoring research and innovations that adopt a gender-sensitive approach.

Nevertheless, the situation analysed in the preliminary phase presented a good gender balance. The construction and implementation of this Gender Equality Plan testifies Proplast's intention towards maintaining and strengthening the gender balance through the formalisation of the commitment and the adoption of specific guarantee procedures, as well as actions to support the conciliation of work and personal life and to combat situations of harassment and/or violence that could lead to a different picture and also damage areas that do not currently require intervention by Proplast.

The Proplast Gender Equality Plan

Following Gender Auditing, through co-planning meetings between the Proplast management and the FGB group, the objectives were identified and articulated.

The **five general objectives** in the plan are:

General Objectives	
1	Develop a gender equality plan and raise awareness on equal opportunities, gender stereotypes and unconscious biases
2	Support gender balance in Proplast staff, especially in leadership positions
3	Promote and support research, development and innovation activities with a gender perspective
4	Improve individual well-being by strengthening work-life balance measures
5	Implement measures to contrast gender-based violence

Each of the objectives is detailed in the following pages into **Actions, Responsibilities, Resources, Timeline, Monitoring Indicators**.

General Objective 1: Develop a gender equality plan and raise awareness on equal opportunities, gender stereotypes and unconscious biases

General Objective 1 consists of 4 specific objectives and 11 actions that aim to develop a strategic plan for gender equality and raise awareness on equal opportunities, gender stereotypes and inclusive culture within the entire organisation.

Action 1.1 establishes a group responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this GEP and in general for equality and inclusion within Proplast. The identification of contact persons is essential for an optimal advancement of the objectives and for the role of communication and representation both internally and externally. Action 1.1.2 was conducted as part of the preliminary work leading to the definition of this strategic plan. A context analysis was carried out through the collection and processing of quantitative data disaggregated by gender regarding the organisation's staff and with reference to levels of gender equality in different areas, as well as a series of qualitative data on the climate of inclusion and equality. Action 1.1.3, on the other hand, consisted in consultation with a group of experts from the Giacomo Brodolini Foundation with experience in gender equality facilitation and design in order to identify objectives to be achieved, timeframes and monitoring and evaluation indicators.

Action 1.2.1 commits the responsible team to the drafting of 4 monitoring and evaluation reports, 3 intermediate and 1 final. Every six months there will thus be an opportunity to measure the impacts of the GEP in order to deploy progressive adjustments where necessary with respect to changing needs, but also to gather information and experience in the direction of the sustainability of the plan at the end of the first two years. Complementarily, the reporting activity will facilitate the systematisation of data collection both through gender disaggregation and on the process towards inclusion and diversity (activity 1.2.2).

Actions 1.3.1, 1.3.2 and 1.3.3 concern the approval by the management of the Gender Equality Plan and its publication on Proplast's website, which will have to be accompanied by an information activity towards all the staff through the sending of a dedicated e-mail explaining the reason and the purposes of the GEP and through an official presentation in the periodical meetings of all the staff. Finally, the commitment to gender equality will be publicly stated on Proplast's communication channels in order to signal the process underway and give publicity to the adoption and implementation of this GEP.

The actions of the specific objective 1.4 pertain to the promotion of the use of inclusive language and training events on issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion. In particular, the first action is the realisation of training webinars on inclusive language and unconscious gender stereotypes to be delivered to the entire Proplast population. The aim of these training sessions is to create a common-ground knowledge on the topic and prevent unconscious discriminatory behaviour. The second action focuses on the dissemination and promotion of DEI-themed training events and contents for Proplast partner companies and organisations, in order to act as a megaphone and antenna for consortium members who may need an initial approach to the topic. The third and last action focuses on the creation of a document on gender language and inclusive communication. The aim is to disseminate effective, non-discriminatory communication techniques and provide clear guidelines that can foster shared, respectful and consistent communication within the organisation.

General Objective 1

Develop a gender equality plan and raise awareness on equal opportunities, gender stereotypes and unconscious biases

Total investment	Eur 61.454,00
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Specific objective 1.1	Defining the Gender Equality Plan
Action 1.1.1	<p><i>Establish a team responsible for GEP and monitoring Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the organisation</i></p> <p>Proplast will appoint qualified internal resources responsible for the implementation of GEP monitoring. The team will play a strategic role in achieving the objectives and will be the internal and external point of reference for gender equity, diversity and inclusion in Proplast.</p>
Responsibility	Mancino Rosalba
Timeline	Within the first month after the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment of roles with a two-year tenure; Implementation of the activities planned within the GEP; Reporting (every six months for a total of 4 Reports of which 1 final and 3 intermediate) of Proplast's GEP implementation.
Action 1.1.2	<p><i>Context analysis through the study of gender-disaggregated data</i></p> <p>Proplast will share its data on personnel (including age, education level, job classification and RAL), work-life balance measures and internal practices. The data will be analysed and, based on the results, the state of the art in gender equality will be identified.</p>
Responsibility	Mancino Rosalba
Timeline	By the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Sharing; Data analysis and state-of-the-art reconstruction in the GEP
Action 1.1.3	<p><i>External advice on defining objectives and actions, definition of indicators and evaluation</i></p> <p>Proplast will use the advice of FGB for the identification of the objectives of this plan and the planning of activities with related timeframes and indicators</p>
Responsibility	<i>Mancino Rosalba</i>
Timeline	By the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultancy activation; Scheduling of planning meetings; Definition of objectives, actions and monitoring indicators.

Specific objective 1.2	Progress monitoring and GEP verification
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Action 1.2.1	<p><i>Produce periodic reports on the monitoring and evaluation of the Plan and its impacts</i></p> <p>In order to ensure ongoing monitoring and make any incremental adjustments, the GEP team will produce periodic reports on the progress of the Plan. The intermediate and final reports will allow an assessment of the activities carried out and impacts achieved for possible redesign of the GEP.</p>
Responsibility	Remotti Susana
Timeline	Every 6 months from the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of 3 interim reports, at month 6, 12 and 18 respectively; • production of the final report by month 24.
Action 1.2.2	<p><i>Systematising the collection of gender-disaggregated data</i></p> <p>Through periodic reporting and ongoing monitoring of the GEP, it will develop a system for collecting gender-disaggregated data.</p>
Responsibility	Mancino Rosalba
Timeline	Activation of the mechanism within month 3 from the start of the GEP; Data collection throughout the duration of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up a dedicated database

Specific objective 1.3	Providing communication in support of GEP and gender equality
Action 1.3.1	<p><i>Publishing the GEP</i></p> <p>The GEP, approved by management, will be formally published on the Proplast website. There will be a link for free download of the plan..</p>
Responsibility	Remotti Susana
Timeline	At the approval of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GEP publicity on the Proplast website • Target: page views and post views
Action 1.3.2	<p><i>Informing staff by e-mail and in plenary meeting of the existence of the GEP</i></p> <p>Proplast will disseminate the GEP to all staff by internal e-mail and by official presentation in plenary meeting.</p>
	Remotti Susana
Timeline	Within the first month after the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending information e-mail to all staff on the publication of the Plan and the staff involved and responsible for the implementation of the GEP with a link to the page on the site containing the GEP • Plenary presentation on the contents and purpose of the GEP
Action 1.3.3	<p><i>Publicly declare their commitment to gender equality (website or vademecum; intranet)</i></p> <p>Proplast will set up a special page on its website publicising the adoption of the GEP and its purpose.</p>

Responsibility	Remotti Susana
Timeline	Within the first month after the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of the GEP launch post on the Proplast website and social networks • Target: page views and post views

Specific objective 1.4	Providing training and awareness-raising interventions on inclusive language and unconscious biases
Action 1.4.1	<p><i>Training pills and awareness-raising events for the entire Proplast population (webinars)</i></p> <p>Awareness-raising training webinars on inclusive language and unconscious gender stereotypes and prejudices will be designed for all internal staff. The training, delivered with the support of ad hoc counselling, aims to provide awareness on diversity and inclusion, improve the ability to communicate this knowledge, and prevent discriminatory behaviour.</p>
Responsibility	Remotti Susana
Timeline	Within the first 6 months of the start-up of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realisation of webinars; • training participation by at least 75% of Proplast's population
Action 1.4.2	<p><i>Sharing and dissemination of DEI events and content for companies and consortium organisation</i></p> <p>Proplast is committed to promoting and disseminating its training webinars, together with other DEI-themed initiatives to consortium members, in particular partner companies</p>
Responsibility	Remotti Susana
Timeline	Throughout the duration of the GEP, whenever events are identified for promotion
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of attendees of partner companies in webinars • Number of views of promotion posts and responses to invitations
Action 1.4.3	<p><i>Drawing up guidelines on the use of inclusive language</i></p> <p>Development of a document on gender language and inclusive communication.</p>
Responsibility	Remotti Susana
Timeline	Drafting of the guidelines within month 3 of the start of the GEP; adoption of the guidelines within month 6.
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalisation of the guidelines; • Dissemination of the guidelines.

General Objective 2: Support gender balance in Proplast staff, especially in leadership positions

The second general objective is composed of 3 specific objectives and 3 related actions. The ambition of this objective is to support and enhance the balance in the presence of men and women in the various Proplast sectors and career positions.

To this end, the first specific objective focuses on selection and career development processes and prescribes the incorporation of inclusive criteria at all stages of human resources management. Guidelines will be defined to improve the attraction of talent and the empowerment of people already in the organisation.

The second specific objective expresses a long-term ambition in this regard. By raising awareness, at strategic moments and through the sharing of direct experience, of the benefits in promoting working environments and in particular coordination bodies and top management with a good gender balance, it is intended to support the entry of women and the gender perspective in the consortium's board.

Finally, the third specific objective proposes a training action on inclusive leadership for staff in coordination positions. The aim of this intervention is to contribute to the development of new leadership models that overcome stereotypes, deconstruct unconscious prejudices and favour not only the rebalancing of the presence of women in top positions but also a more inclusive group management for all.

General Objective 2: Support gender balance in Proplast staff, especially in leadership positions	
Total investment	Eur 16.244,00

Specific objective 2.1	Incorporate attention to inclusive criteria at all stages of the personnel management process from selection to professional development
Action 2.1.1	<i>Guidelines on the selection process and career paths with a focus on gender balance</i> Proplast will develop guidelines with inclusive criteria to attract talent, optimise the recruitment process and foster professional development
Responsibility	Mancino Rosalba
Timeline	Development of criteria within the first 6 months of the start of the GEP and adoption of criteria from the following 6 months onwards
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of criteria; • Dissemination of the guidelines; • Increase in applications and promotions by women and other marginalised subjects

Specific objective 2.2	Achieving a balance in the presence of men and women in the different departments of the organisation
Action 2.2.1	<i>Raising awareness of the benefits of a greater gender balance</i> Proplast will carry out direct and indirect awareness-raising on the benefits of a greater gender balance in the activities and reputation of the consortium.
Responsibility	Mancino Rosalba
Timeline	Throughout the GEP, at strategic moments
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry of a female member on the consortium board by 2025

Specific objective 2.3	Providing training on inclusive leadership
Action 2.3.1	<i>Organising training events on inclusive leadership for management</i> Proplast, after identifying management figures within the organisation, will organise a training day on inclusive leadership
Responsibility	Remotti Susana
Timeline	Within the first 18 months of the start-up of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine-tuning the tailor-made course • Identification of the training team • Training delivery

General Objective 3. Promote and support research, development and innovation activities with a gender perspective

The aim of General Objective 3 is to promote and support research, development and innovation activities that take into account the gender dimension both in the composition of the research team and in the inclusion of the gender perspective in research projects. To this end, the general objective consists of four specific objectives, and a total of five actions.

Specific objective 3.1 recommends the development of a methodology for the collection of gender-disaggregated data on publications, innovations and projects in which Proplast participates. To do that, a special database will be set up that will allow, on the one hand, to comply with the requirements of calls for tender for European and national projects and, on the other hand, to monitor internally the degree of gender mainstreaming in Proplast's research and innovation products. The aim is to enhance the work that Proplast already carries out and consciously integrate a gender-sensitive perspective for the work that Proplast will carry out.

In continuity with this, the specific objective 3.2 wants to promote access to innovation projects that include the gender perspective. The planned activity therefore consists of the creation of a checklist of themes and questions to be used during consultancy activities to promote the inclusion of the gender dimension in research and innovation projects, starting from the sharing of its own experience.

Specific objective 3.3 aims to raise awareness of the importance of including the gender perspective in research as a quality criterion. To do this, two actions have been planned: the first concerns the creation of a digital library of existing studies on plastics and gender, with the aim of defining the state of the art in scientific terms on the subject and sharing it with the various teams; the second consists of organising informal moments of exchange and confrontation between the working teams and official seminars with external professionals who are experts in gender and innovation in order to integrate these skills into Proplast's approach.

Finally, the specific objective 3.4 identifies the acknowledgment of the gender dimension as a key criterion for the expansion and strengthening of project partners and networking. Partnerships will be favoured with actors that have initiated a discussion and adopt a gender perspective in order to facilitate the exchange of good practices and the sharing of mutual value.

General Objective 3	
Promote and support research, development and innovation activities with a gender perspective	
Total investment	Eur 19.452,00

Specific objective 3.1	Collect gender-disaggregated data on publications/innovations and monitor gender mainstreaming in projects
Action 3.1.1	<i>Definition of a data grid on gender-disaggregated publications/inventions according to the requirements of European and national funding calls, starting with GEP implementation and a special database on gender and innovation projects</i> A dedicated database will be set up for retroactive collection and periodic monitoring of both qualitative and quantitative gender and innovation

	projects. Furthermore, in accordance with recent national and European calls for tenders, data on publications and innovations will be collected disaggregated by gender.
Responsibility	Luana Montalbano
Timeline	Activation of the mechanism within month 3 from the start of the GEP; data update every 3 months
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grid creation • Updating the database periodically

Specific objective 3.2	Promoting access to innovative research projects that include gender
Action 3.2.1	<p><i>Promoting in consultancy with clients the inclusion of the gender dimension in research and innovation projects</i></p> <p>Proplast will produce a checklist of themes and questions to be used during consultancy activities to promote the inclusion of the gender dimension in research and innovation projects, starting from the sharing of its own experience.</p>
Responsibility	Maria Rosa Contardi
Timeline	Within the first 9 months of the start of the GEP and throughout its duration
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing of the checklist • Number of customers to whom it is presented

Specific objective 3.3	Raising awareness of the importance of including a gender perspective in research/innovations as a quality criterion
Action 3.3.1	<p><i>Creating a repository of studies/R&D projects on plastic materials and products including the gender dimension</i></p> <p>A digital library of studies on plastic materials and products as well as R&D projects including the gender dimension will be created. This bibliographic collection will be shared with the various teams engaged in research and innovation activities and will also be made available to the cluster members.</p>
Responsibility	Luana Montalbano
Timeline	Within month 18 of the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of necessary resources • Creation of the repository
Action 3.3.2	<p><i>Organise workshops and seminars with experts on Gender & Innovation for the whole cluster</i></p> <p>Proplast will organise informal exchange sessions and seminars, by using the repository under construction on research concerning plastics and gender, t with external professionals dealing with gender and innovation.</p>

Responsibility	Luana Montalbano
Timeline	Every 12 months from the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation of exchange seminars/meetings • Participation of Proplast core research and innovation teams

Specific objective 3.4	Network expansion and strengthening
Action 3.4.1	<p><i>Include the gender dimension in the construction/enhancement of national and international research consortia and networks</i></p> <p>The aim is to expand the network by involving actors that take the gender dimension into account in their research and innovation activities, so as to foster the exchange of good practices and promote projects and partnerships with them.</p>
Responsibility	Marco Monti
Timeline	Throughout the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new partners with an approved GEP • Total number of partners with an approved GEP • Number of bodies carrying out gender-sensitive research and innovation activities

General Objective 4: Improve individual well-being by strengthening work-life balance measures

The fourth general objective addresses the strengthening of work-life balance measures in order to improve the individual well-being of all the organisation's human resources. The objective consists of 2 specific objectives and 3 actions.

The first specific objective (4.1) aims to map existing work-life balance services and possibilities and the benefits that the company supports in order to fully disseminate them within the workforce (action 4.1.1). During the auditing phase, it became clear that formalising and informing about existing measures is the first step towards better use of these measures. To complete this objective, action 4.1.2 envisages the creation and administration of an internal survey to investigate possible hidden conciliation needs among Proplast employees. The data collected will be fundamental for an evaluation that will go in the direction of triggering a discussion on the implementation of ad hoc measures that also go beyond legal obligations (such as more study leaves).

The second specific objective (4.2) concerns persons returning to work after a long period of absence (e.g. returning after maternity leave, extended sick leave or other). It is Proplast's clear intention to reintegrate these persons in the most effective way, so as to eliminate the risk of repercussions on retention or career development. To do this, activities and persons responsible for further training and mentoring will be put in place.

General Objective 4	
Improve individual well-being by strengthening work-life balance measures	
Total investment	Eur 11.629

Specific objective 4.1	Formalising existing work life balance measures, informing staff of the possibilities already in place and initiating reflection on new measures to promote conciliation
Action 4.1.1	<i>Formalising and raising awareness of the possibilities of conciliation and benefits</i> Proplast is committed to formalising and informing staff about existing work-life balance possibilities and company benefits.
Responsibility	Mancino Rosalba
Timeline	Within the first 12 months of the start-up of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring the increase/decrease in the use of work life balance measures
Action 4.1.2	<i>Assessment of interventions beyond legal obligations through an internal survey</i> Through an internal survey, any new conciliation needs will be identified and the possibility of implementing interventions beyond legal obligations (e.g. additional study leave) will be assessed.
Responsibility	Remotti Susana

Timeline	Within month 21 from the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey response rate • Identification of new forms of work-life balance

Specific objective 4.2	Provide update and mentoring actions for those who take long absences (maternity, illness) to maintain and develop their career paths
Action 4.2.1	<p><i>Define mentoring arrangements after returning from long absences</i></p> <p>The organisation undertakes to define a support mechanism aimed at updating and mentoring people returning to the organisation after long absences.</p>
Responsibility	Oneto Valentina
Timeline	Whenever the need arises (each time after a long absence)
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indication of mentorship assignments; • Definition of cases in which to activate the mechanism • Number of mentor-mentee pairs activated over the two years

General Objective 5: Implement measures to contrast gender-based violence

Violence against women undermines fundamental women's rights such as dignity, access to justice and gender equality. However, studies⁵ confirm that these forms of power relations are not immediately recognisable as they are completely amalgamated with a certain dominant culture.

Therefore, General Objective 5 aims to combat gender-based violence through the definition of three specific objectives and five related actions.

The first specific objective (5.1) sees the definition of an ethical code against all forms of violence. The purpose of the code will be to make explicit the behaviour considered unacceptable by the organisation through action 5.1.1 and will assume an informative and preventive function through action 5.1.2 of publication and dissemination. The drafting of a code of ethics aims to unmask certain behaviours that are part of cultural or corporate practice that conceal sexist attitudes or gender bias and publicly condemn them.

Proplast commits with the second specific objective (5.2) to equip itself with a reporting mechanism and a procedure for the management of possible cases of violence and/or harassment. The first related action therefore envisages the identification of a person delegated, within the organisation, to receive reports and the identification of an external figure expert in the management and resolution of cases, when and where necessary. The mechanism to be created goes in the direction of guaranteeing the reception of reports and maximum protection for women who decide to report a situation of harassment or violence. The next action will be to make all staff aware of the process developed and how it works, so as to raise awareness of the organisation's zero-tolerance policy towards gender-based violence and to foster the emergence of cases that need assessment and/or specific measures.

The third and last specific objective (5.3) intervenes directly on culture and aims to raise awareness on the causes and consequences of micro-aggressions and harassment and thus to build shared knowledge on gender-based violence. The envisaged action (5.3.1) consists of organising training sessions aimed at promoting a safer work space.

General Objective 5	
Implement measures to combat gender-based violence	
Total investment	Eur 45.348,00

Specific objective 5.1	Drawing up a code of ethics against all forms of violence
Action 5.1.1	<i>Drafting a code of ethics</i> Proplast is committed to drawing up a code of ethics outlining behaviour considered unlawful and unacceptable within the organisation.

⁵ European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (2014), Violence against women: an EU-wide survey Overview of findings, Available at this link:

<https://fra.europa.eu/it/publication/2020/violenza-contro-le-donne-unindagine-livello-di-unione-europea-panoramica-dei>

Responsibility	Mancino Rosalba
Timeline	Drafting within the first 12 months after the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine-tuning the code
Action 5.1.2	<p><i>Publish the code of ethics and inform all staff of its existence</i></p> <p>The code once developed will be made public and will be presented to Proplast staff</p>
Responsibility	Remotti Susana
Timeline	Within month 15 of the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of the code • Circulation of the code among the organisation's staff

Specific objective 5.2	Define a policy for the management of eventual cases
Action 5.2.1	<p><i>Identification of an internal contact resource and an external "Consigliera di Fiducia"</i></p> <p>An internal person within the organisation will be identified who will collect any reports and activate, if necessary, an external resource for case management.</p>
Responsibility	Mancino Rosalba
Timeline	Within the first 3 months of the start-up of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and appointment of internal contact person • Identification of the Consigliera di Fiducia
Action 5.2.2	<p><i>Define and raise awareness of the possibility of reporting and the case management process</i></p> <p>A precise procedure will be defined for taking complaints and managing the path to mediation and resolution. It will then make all staff aware of the envisaged procedure and how it will be managed.</p>
Responsibility	Remotti Susana
Timeline	Within month 21 from the start of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of reports • Token activations of the counsellor

Specific objective 5.3	Preventing and detecting sexual harassment, micro-aggressions and violence
Action 5.3.1	<p><i>Organise training events on harassment, abuse of power, micro-aggressions (also open to companies and organisations in the consortium)</i></p> <p>Proplast will organise training sessions on the recognition of harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace in order to stimulate collective reflection on safety and to foster the construction of shared knowledge on the consequences of micro-aggressions.</p>

Responsibility	Remotti Susana
Timeline	Within the first 18 months of the start-up of the GEP
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fine-tuning training interventions• Training delivery• Participation of at least 75% of staff

Overall value of Proplast GEP

The total value of Proplast's Gender Equality Plan is 46.128,00 euro.

The resulting investment comes from a careful valorisation of internal resources and from the involvement of external resources and organization with specific expertise. Internal resources have been designed to be in charge of implementing the activities that are incorporated in their respective competencies and mission; the specialized consultancies have been activated and/or will be activated regarding specific sectors and activities propaedeutic to the achievement of gender equality.

Proplast – Plastics Innovation Pole, being a site of excellence for the realisation and promotion of innovative solutions in the plastics sector and bringing together 200 members in the consortium, is committed to promote gender equality and inclusion in its organization and among its stakeholders.

The Gender Equality Plan has also been reviewed and approved by board of Directors

Gender Equality Plan Proplast	
Total investment	Eur 154.127,00