GENDER EQUALITY PLAN (GEP)

Asociația Școala de Valori [School of Values]

Implementation period: 2025 – 2030

1. INTRODUCTION

In a constantly changing world, **equal opportunities and gender equality** are no longer just ethical ideals, but essential elements of organizational excellence, innovation, and social sustainability. Organizations that embrace diversity and promote inclusion become more resilient, creative, and legitimate in the eyes of the communities they serve.
The School of Values, in its capacity as an educational and pro-active civic actor, reaffirms its firm commitment to equal opportunities and gender equality. The 2025–2030 Gender Equality Plan we propose is not just a set of promises, but an integrated strategy based on evidence, accountability, and transparency. We aim to build an organizational culture that values inclusion, respect, and fairness and to integrate these principles into our decisions, projects, and activities, not just as a separate chapter, but as an integral part of our mission.

This plan responds to increasingly pronounced global and European trends:

- **gender mainstreaming**, which translates into the integration of the principle of equal opportunities and gender equality into all organizational policies and processes;
- **transparency and social responsibility**, through open reporting and independent evaluations;
- **inclusive organizational culture**, which is not limited to policies but is reflected in internal values, relationships, and practices;
- **the use of disaggregated data and gender and opportunity indicators** as tools for measuring and rationalising decisions;
- **adaptability and continuous learning** in a rapidly changing societal context – from fluid gender perspectives to new realities in the educational, professional and social fields.

Through this GEP Plan, the School of Values assumes responsibility for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on progress, rectifying what is not working, and evolving together with all stakeholders involved: staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, and other interested parties.
In this sense, the Plan is more than a document: it is a **public commitment**, a **framework for action**, and a **call for internal and external transformation**, based on both equal opportunities and gender equality.

2. ABSTRACT

Equal opportunities and gender equality represent a state of balance in which women and men, as well as people with diverse gender identities, enjoy the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in all areas of social, economic, and cultural life.

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This involves eliminating direct and indirect discrimination, ensuring equal access to resources and benefits, and equal participation in decision-making. Equal opportunities and gender equality do not mean standardizing roles, but rather recognizing and valuing diversity, ensuring the necessary conditions for each person to reach their potential without being limited by stereotypes or social constraints.

In an organizational context, this means:

- **fair and non-discriminatory treatment** in recruitment, selection, and promotion processes;
- **equitable pay and working conditions adapted** to support work-life balance;
- **balanced gender representation** in management structures and decision-making processes;
- **clear policies and procedures** to prevent and punish gender-based harassment and violence;
- **integration of the equal opportunities and gender perspective** into all the organization's activities and educational programs.

Thus, equal opportunities and gender equality are fundamental principles of human rights and essential factors for sustainable development, social cohesion, and organizational excellence.

3. REGULATIONS

3.1. Legislative framework in Romania

Equal opportunities between women and men are guaranteed by the Romanian Constitution and regulated by a series of laws and normative acts:

- **Romanian Constitution (1991, revised in 2003)** – Art. 16(1) and (2): "Citizens are equal before the law and public authorities, without privileges or discrimination"; Art. 41: "The right to work cannot be restricted. For equal work, women shall receive equal pay with men."
- **Law No. 202/2002 on equal opportunities and treatment between women and men** – the main framework for promoting gender equality in Romania, establishes measures to eliminate discrimination and sets up the **National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES)**.
- **The Labor Code (Law No. 53/2003, as amended)** – regulates the principle of non-discrimination in employment and labor relations, as well as equal pay for work of equal value.
- **Law No. 202/2002 and Law No. 217/2003** – establish measures to prevent and combat domestic violence and harassment in the workplace.
- **Emergency Ordinance No. 137/2000 on the prevention and punishment of all forms of discrimination** – regulates the general anti-discrimination framework, which also applies to discrimination based on sex or gender.

3.2. Legislative framework at European Union level

The European Union has a strong tradition of promoting gender equality, enshrined in treaties and secondary legislation:

- **Treaty on European Union and Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)**
  - Art. 2 TEU: equality between women and men is one of the fundamental values of the Union.

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- Art. 8 TFEU: in all its activities, the Union shall promote equality between women and men.
- Art. 157 TFEU: enshrines the principle of **equal pay for equal work**.

- **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000)**
  - Art. 21: prohibits discrimination, including on grounds of sex.
  - Art. 23: provides for equality between women and men in all areas, including work, employment, and pay.
- **Directive 2006/54/EC** on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast).
- **Directive 2010/41/EU** on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity.
- **Directive (EU) 2019/1158** on work-life balance for parents and carers (Work-Life Balance Directive).
- **Directive (EU) 2022/2381** on improving the gender balance on the boards of listed companies.
- **Directive (EU) 2023/970** – strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms.

3.3. Relevant European policies and strategies

- **EU Strategy for Gender Equality 2020–2025** – major guidelines on gender equality at European level.
- **European Pact for Gender Equality 2020–2030 (adopted by the Council of the EU)** – complements the Strategy and strengthens Member States' commitments to balanced participation and reducing gender gaps.
- **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN), Goal 5** – achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, supported by the European Union.

4. GEP FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

The School of Values' Gender Equality Plan is based on the following fundamental principles:

1. **Non-discrimination** – all persons, regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics, shall receive equal treatment and protection against direct and indirect discrimination.
2. **Equity and equal access to opportunities** – we promote fair working conditions, remuneration, professional development, and participation in decision-making for all genders.
3. **Balanced representation** – we strive for balanced participation of women and men, as well as people with diverse gender identities, in leadership structures, educational projects, and governance processes.
4. **Gender mainstreaming** – we consider the impact on gender equality in all of the organization's policies, programs, and activities, including research and education projects.
5. **Transparency and accountability** – we are committed to regularly publishing data and reports on the implementation of the GEP Plan and to ensuring public access to our gender equality policies.
6. **Participation and inclusion** – the GEP Plan is developed and implemented in a participatory manner, involving staff, volunteers, and stakeholders, to reflect the real diversity of the organization and the community.
7. **Prevention and protection** – we take a zero-tolerance approach to gender-based harassment and violence, providing clear reporting and support mechanisms for those affected.

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8. **Continuous improvement** – gender equality is a dynamic process; through ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of our policies and practices, we strive for steady and sustainable progress.

5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The strategic objectives of the GEP Plan define the major directions through which the School of Values aims to transform the principles of gender equality into concrete and measurable results. They reflect both the organization's commitment to complying with the national and European legislative framework and its aspiration to build an inclusive organizational culture in which diversity is recognized as a resource and a source of innovation.
In a context where educational and civic institutions play an essential role in promoting equity and combating stereotypes, our objectives set clear benchmarks for the next five years. They focus on: balanced representation in leadership structures, eliminating gender pay gaps, equal access to professional development, preventing and combating harassment, and integrating a gender perspective into all of the organization's projects and programs.
These objectives are formulated according to the **SMART** logic – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound – to ensure rigorous monitoring and steady progress. By achieving them, the School of Values aims to be a model of good practice in the field of gender equality and to actively contribute to the positive transformation of society.

Strategic Objectives 2025-2030

1. **Ensuring balanced gender representation in management structures**
   - Objective: to achieve a minimum of 40% representation for each gender on the Board of Directors and in management teams by 2030.
2. **Reducing gender pay gaps and ensuring pay equity**
   - Objective: achieve full salary transparency and eliminate unjustified pay gaps between women and men by 2028.
3. **Promote equal access to professional development**
   - Objective: 100% of staff to receive annual training in professional skills and leadership, monitored separately by gender.
4. **Strengthening work-life balance policies**
   - Objective: to implement flexible working arrangements (flexible working hours, teleworking, fair health leave) for all employees by 2026.
5. **Preventing and combating gender-based harassment and discrimination**
   - Objective: to establish a functional confidential reporting mechanism and an accessible counseling system, with annual public reporting, by 2025 and to maintain "zero tolerance" throughout the period.
6. **Integrating a gender perspective into all educational and research projects**
   - Objective: to carry out a gender impact analysis for 100% of new projects starting in 2026.
7. **Developing an inclusive organizational culture**
   - Objective: to run at least two internal awareness campaigns on equality and diversity issues each year and to measure progress through internal surveys.
8. **Transparent monitoring and reporting**

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- Objective: to publish the GEP Report (in Romanian and English) annually, with clear indicators, progress, and areas for improvement.

6. AREAS OF ACTION, MEASURES, AND INDICATORS

In order to translate strategic objectives into concrete actions, the School of Values proposes a coherent framework for intervention, structured around major areas of action. These areas reflect both organizational priorities and commitments made under national and European legislation on gender equality.
Each area of action is accompanied by specific measures, performance indicators (KPIs), clear deadlines, and designated responsible persons, thus ensuring a transparent and monitorable process. Through this approach, the organization aims not only to comply with its obligations, but also to strengthen an "inclusive and equitable organizational culture" that supports the sustainable development of the team and projects.

Areas of action and measures for GEP 2025–2030

1. Leadership and governance

- **Specific measures**:
  - Set a target of 40–60% gender representation on the Board of Directors and management team.
  - Introduce a mentoring program for women and people from underrepresented groups.
- **KPIs**:
  - % of women/men in leadership structures.
  - No. of participants in mentoring programs (by gender).
- **Deadlines**: 2025 (policy establishment), 2026–2030 (annual monitoring).
- **Responsible parties**: Board of Directors, Operations Manager, GEP Officer.

2. Pay equity and working conditions

- **Specific measures**:
  - Conduct a gender-disaggregated pay audit every 2 years.
  - Publish salary scales and ranges in job advertisements.
- **KPIs**:
  - Median pay gap between women and men (%).
  - No. of job advertisements with salary range included (% of total).
- **Deadlines**: Audit 2026 and 2028; annual monitoring.
- **Responsible**: Board of Directors, Chief Financial Officer.

3. Recruitment and professional development

- **Specific measures**:
  - Applying inclusive recruitment principles (neutral language, clear criteria, structured interviews).

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    - Ensuring equal access to training and leadership courses.
- **KPIs**:
    - % of women/men who apply, are selected, and are hired.
    - % of staff who participate in training annually (by gender).
- **Deadlines**: 2025 (recruitment policy), 2026–2030 (annual reports).
- **Responsible parties**: Operations Manager, Department Managers, GEP Officer.

4. Work-life blending

- **Specific measures**:
    - Implementation of teleworking and flexible working options.
    - Reintegration policy after parental leave.
- **KPIs**:
    - No. of employees benefiting from flexibility measures (by gender).
    - % of employees returning after parental leave and retaining their position.
- **Deadlines**: 2025–2026 (implementation), 2027–2030 (annual evaluation).
- **Responsible parties**: Operations Manager, Department Managers, Chief Financial Officer.

5. Preventing and combating harassment

- **Specific measures**:
    - Adopting an anti-harassment policy and a confidential reporting mechanism.
    - Organizing an annual mandatory training session on harassment and unconscious biases.
- **KPIs**:
    - Existence and functioning of the reporting mechanism (yes/no).
    - % of staff participating in training.
    - No. of cases reported and resolved (aggregate, without personal data).
- **Deadlines**: 2025 (policy and mechanism), 2026–2030 (annual training + reporting).
- **Responsible parties**: GEP Officer, Operations Manager, Gender Equality Committee.

6. Integrating a gender perspective into programs and projects

- **Specific measures**:
    - Introduction of a gender checklist in the design process of each project.
    - Collection of gender-disaggregated data on project beneficiaries.
- **KPIs**:
    - % of new projects with gender impact analysis performed.
    - No. of project reports with gender-disaggregated data.
- **Deadlines**: starting in S2 2026 (mandatory for all projects).
- **Responsible parties**: Project managers, GEP Officer, LOD Manager, Operations Manager.

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7. Organizational culture and awareness

- **Specific measures**:
  - Organization of at least 2 internal campaigns/year on equality and diversity issues.
  - Launch an annual survey on staff perceptions of inclusion.
- **KPIs**:
  - No. of campaigns run/year.
  - % of staff who perceive the organization as inclusive (from survey).
- **Deadlines**: 2025–2030 (annual recurrence).
- **Responsible parties**: GEP Officer, Communications Department, Operations Manager.

7. MONITORING AND REPORTING MECHANISMS

The implementation of a Gender Equality Plan requires a rigorous monitoring and reporting system, which is designed to ensure the consistency, transparency, and effectiveness of the measures adopted. Regular monitoring will allow us to assess progress against the strategic objectives we have set ourselves, identify difficulties in a timely manner, and thus adjust our actions when necessary.

By establishing clear mechanisms for data collection, analysis, and reporting, Școala de Valori ensures that gender equality does not remain just a stated principle, but becomes a permanent, measurable, and perfectible practice over time. Annual reporting to management, funders, and the general public reflects the organization's commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Thus, our monitoring and reporting mechanisms become essential tools for strengthening an inclusive organizational culture and achieving the goals set for the period 2025–2030.

GEP 2025–2030 monitoring and reporting mechanisms

1. Monitoring implementation

- **Data collection**: periodically, the Delivery Manager and GEP Officer collect gender-disaggregated data on staff, management, recruitment, salaries, training participation, and indicators from the implementation matrix.
- **Monitoring tools**:
  - Internal database with key indicators (updated annually).
  - Internal surveys on staff perceptions of equality and inclusion.
  - Reporting of harassment/discrimination incidents through the confidential mechanism.
- **Frequency**: monitoring is carried out annually, with an interim assessment every 6 months on the progress of internal measures.

2. Progress reporting

- **GEP Annual Report**: document published on the organization's website (in Romanian and English), which includes:
  - Progress on each strategic objective.

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- Evolution of indicators compared to previous years.
- Number and type of reported cases of discrimination/harassment (aggregate, anonymous data).
- Corrective measures and plans for the following year.

- **Report to the board and funders**: presented at the annual meetings of the Board of Directors and included in project reports to funders (e.g., Horizon Europe).
- **Public transparency**: the full report is published on the organization's website, accompanied by an accessible summary.

3. Responsibilities for monitoring and reporting

- **GEP Officer**: coordinates the monitoring process, centralizes data, drafts the annual report.
- **Department Managers:** provide data on staff, recruitment, salaries, and training.
- **Project Managers**: report on how the gender perspective has been integrated into projects.
- **Gender Equality Committee**: analyzes progress, makes recommendations, and validates the annual report.
- **Board of Directors**: approves the report and sets directions for the next period.

4. Feedback and improvement mechanisms

- Organizing an annual internal consultation with staff and volunteers to collect suggestions.
- Adjusting GEP objectives and measures according to results and context.
- Possibility of submitting anonymous recommendations through the confidential reporting form.

8. RESOURCES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT GEP 2025–2030

In order for the Gender Equality Plan to be implemented effectively and produce sustainable results, the School of Values will allocate adequate resources covering human, financial, material, and informational aspects.

1. Human resources

- **GEP Officer** – designated responsible for coordinating the implementation and monitoring of the plan.
- **Gender Equality Committee** – interdisciplinary working group that supports planning, evaluation, and policy recommendations.
- **Department Managers and Project Managers** – directly involved in data collection, implementation of measures, and reporting.
- **External consultants** (as appropriate) – for salary audits, specialized training, or independent evaluations.

2. Financial resources

- Annual budget dedicated to GEP implementation, covering:
  - training and awareness-raising activities (workshops, training, campaigns).
  - development and maintenance of confidential reporting mechanisms.
  - external services (consultant, audit, facilitators).

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- translation and publication of documents (RO/EN).
- Internal events to promote an inclusive culture.

3. Material and technical resources

- Digital platforms for collecting and analyzing gender-disaggregated data.
- Confidential online reporting tools.
- Dedicated spaces for training sessions and GEP committee meetings.
- Educational and visual materials for awareness campaigns.

4. Information resources

- Access to up-to-date European and national legislation and policies.
- Good practices and methodological guidelines in the field of gender equality.
- Comparative data and benchmarks at national and European level.

9. CONCLUSION

By adopting and implementing the GEP 2025–2030 Plan, Școala de Valori reaffirms its role as a responsible and visionary educational organization that promotes **equal opportunities and gender equality** as the foundations of a democratic society. For us, diversity is a source of civic strength, creativity, and cohesion, and inclusion is an essential condition for excellence and sustainability.

This plan is not just a strategic document, but a statement of the values we believe in and, at the same time, a public commitment to integrate equal opportunities and gender equality into our organizational philosophy and reflect them in all our policies, processes, and projects.

We are committed to building a safe, fair, and inclusive work environment, promoting equal access to opportunities for every person, and ensuring that all voices are heard, respected, and valued.

Over the next five years, through constant monitoring, transparent reporting, learning, and continuous improvement, we will transform this Plan into a tool for real change, capable of inspiring not only our organization but also the educational and civic ecosystems in which we are involved.

Equal opportunities and gender equality are not just strategic objectives, but fundamental values of the School of Values – necessary steps towards a more just, inclusive, and supportive society.

With friendship,

Silvia Bogdan

Director of Education and Research, President of the School of Values Association

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