



# GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

2022-2023

## Table of contents

- I. Introduction**
- II. Gender and Diversity at Virtual Vehicle**
  - 1. Equal Opportunities Officer | Equal Opportunities Team
  - 2. Employment/Recruiting
  - 3. Gender and diversity-relevant measures for the organization of the research centre
- III. Annex**
  - Overview of goals and measures 2022-2023

## I. Introduction

### **The human being in focus**

Virtual Vehicle is a leading international R&D centre for the automotive and railway industries with currently around 300 employees.

This role requires the creation of an exceptional professional environment for exceptional people. Only in this way Virtual Vehicle can succeed in using its professional advantage to further expand its top position in the international competition. The pooling of competences of highly motivated employees from diverse backgrounds, of all sexes, with the most varied talents as well as the most diverse orientations and ideas, is an important basis for the outstanding innovative capacity of Virtual Vehicle.

To achieve all this, Virtual Vehicle follows the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) described below to ensure equal treatment and opportunities and to promote diversity in thought and action.

The GEP describes the status quo at Virtual Vehicle regarding gender and diversity. It is reviewed and updated annually to monitor continuously the fulfilment of the measures. The overall goal of the Gender Equality Plan is to anchor and implement equal treatment, equal opportunities, and diversity as essential components of a sustainable development in the company.

The GEP is intended in particular to contribute to raising the proportion of women in science and research in general, and especially in one's own organization. Furthermore, the Gender Equality Plan was developed to ensure an ongoing process to improve gender balance. It will make facts, differences, and successes visible and highlights possible needs for improvement.

The objectives of the Virtual Vehicle Gender Equality Plan are:

- Promotion of equal rights/equal treatment of women and men in the company
- Strengthening the role of women and expanding their participation at all levels
- Eliminating gender inequalities in access to, control over and use of resources/career opportunities/promotions, etc.
- Access and provision of up-to-date information on gender and diversity at Virtual Vehicle

The GEP is a flexible tool that considers the characteristics and needs of Virtual Vehicle. As the organization is constantly evolving, the GEP is also constantly evolving and regularly updated. Monitoring the continuous implementation of the measures and the achievement of the set targets is done by the Equal Opportunities Officer in cooperation with the Equal Opportunities Team in the four steps outlined in Figure 1:

Gender Mainstreaming Circle:

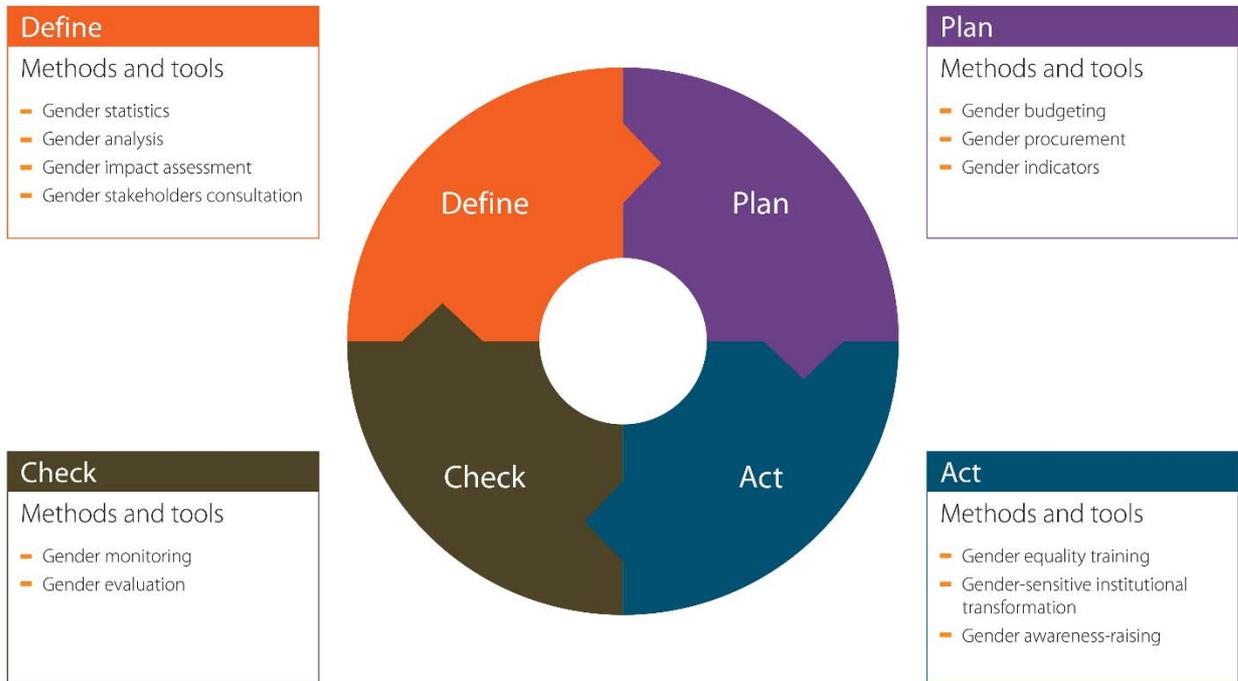


Figure 1<sup>1</sup>

## II. Gender and Diversity at Virtual Vehicle

### 1. Equal Opportunities Officer | Equal Opportunities Team

In 2014, Virtual Vehicle implemented the role of a Gender Mainstreaming Officer.

The tasks of this function previously included establishing gender equality in the company with the aim of creating equal treatment and opportunities for women and men at all levels and intensifying the promotion of diversity. In 2020, the concept of gender mainstreaming was expanded, and the position of an **Equal Opportunities Officer** was created. This person is intended to analyze and address equal treatment and equal opportunities not only in terms of sex and gender. Since then, the focus has also been on other distinguishing characteristics of employees to create a pleasant and appreciative working atmosphere without exclusion or discrimination.

#### Tasks Equal Opportunities Officer

- Coordination of gender- and diversity-relevant topics at the research centre
- Establishing and maintaining internal and external networks
- Coordination of the Equal Opportunities Team (EO-Team)
- Communication with the management - advising and continuously reporting on the activities of the EO-team

<sup>1</sup> Austin, A. E. and Laursen S. L., (2015), *Organisational change strategies in ADVANCE institutional transformation projects: synthesis of a working meeting*, pp. 3-5. (available at: [http://www.colorado.edu/eeer/research/documents/workshopReportPUBLIC\\_113015.pdf](http://www.colorado.edu/eeer/research/documents/workshopReportPUBLIC_113015.pdf)), European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Gender Equality in Academia And Research - GEAR tool, p. 18, 2016.

- Regular monitoring of the planning implementation
- Annual report to the Strategy Board

The **Equal Opportunities Team** was founded in September 2021. Coordinated by the Equal Opportunities Officer, employees from different work areas, management levels and scientific disciplines form a working group dealing with the topics of gender mainstreaming, diversity management and gender & diversity in research and innovation.

The starting point for the team's work is the implementation of the goals of the Gender Equality Plan and the monitoring and evaluation of the implemented measures.

The team members are also the link between their departments/work teams and the Equal Opportunities Officer. They support the exchange of information regarding gender & diversity at Virtual Vehicle.

Functions/Tasks	Implementation
Equal Opportunities Officer	2020
Equal Opportunities Team	09/2021
Diversity Panels	Implementation planned for Q. 3. 2022
Report of the Equal Opportunities Officer	annually in the 4 <sup>th</sup> quarter

## 2. Employment/Recruiting

The proportion of women in technical and scientific professions in Austria is around 37%<sup>2</sup>. The number of female graduates at Graz University of Technology was 18.06 %<sup>3</sup> in the study programs relevant to the research centre. It is a major challenge to create a balance between women and men in the scientific field of automotive engineering due to the underrepresentation of women in these study programs. Virtual Vehicle deliberately establishes links with initiatives that promote the participation of female researchers.

The research centre attaches great importance to recruiting female employees and supporting existing female employees.

Since its foundation, the centre has followed the principle of enabling equal opportunities in research and technology.

Gender mainstreaming is the basis and one of the most decisive factors at the centre to establish flexible working time models, parental leave models and the appointment of new positions.

<sup>2</sup> N. Bergmann, N. Lachmayr, M. Mayerl & N. Pretterhofer, "Frauen in technischen Ausbildungen und Berufen - Fokus auf förderliche Ansätze", Österreichisches Institut für Berufsbildungsforschung - L&R Sozialforschung, 2021.

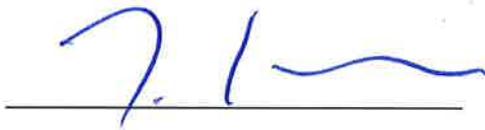
<sup>3</sup> As at 30.09.2021:

Source: [https://online.tugraz.at/tug\\_online/Studierendenstatistik.html?pAuswertung=13&pSJ=1664&pSemester=S&pGruppierung=2&pVerteilungsschlüssel=TRUE](https://online.tugraz.at/tug_online/Studierendenstatistik.html?pAuswertung=13&pSJ=1664&pSemester=S&pGruppierung=2&pVerteilungsschlüssel=TRUE), last accessed 14.01.2022

### 3. Gender and diversity-relevant measures for the organization of the research centre 2022-2023

Measures have already been defined for the years 2022-2023, and their implementation and impact will be evaluated at the end of 2023. Based on this, the measures for the next two years will be developed and defined. Figure 1, "Gender Mainstreaming Circle", describes the process involved.

Graz, 21 February 2022

A handwritten signature in blue ink is positioned above a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'J. Bernasch'.

Dr Jost Bernasch  
Managing Director

### III. Annex

#### Virtual Vehicle GEP 2022-2023

#### Overview

#### Targets and measures for the period 2022-2023

#### 1. Recruiting & Employment

Topic	Goals	Measures
<b>Job postings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender-sensitive formulations</li> <li>• Increase in applications from women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further implement analysis and adaptation of the templates used so far</li> <li>• Training for HR and managers on the topics of unconscious bias, language bias, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Parental leave</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitating the return to work</li> <li>• Promotion of paternity leave</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive information for all employees through HR</li> <li>• Flexible working hours, part-time etc. after return for the compatibility of family and career</li> <li>• Communication during maternity leave (invitation to company events, access to current information via intranet, internal emails etc.)</li> <li>• Marginal employment during maternity leave</li> </ul>
<b>Diversity management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase understanding of gender and diversity on the part of Virtual Vehicle</li> <li>• Identify and mitigate or eliminate language barriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve onboarding by revising the mentoring process (incl. creating a mentoring guide that takes gender and diversity aspects into account).</li> <li>• Internal training on interculturality, diversity, gender mainstreaming, etc.</li> <li>• Expand offers for intercultural exchange (e.g. national café, language tandems etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Work-life balance</b>	Continuous improvement of the work-life balance with adaptation to the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of existing working time models regarding the changed life situations concerning COVID pandemic (care duties, home office, health promotion...)</li> <li>• Active support in career planning and professional development (information on further training opportunities, advice on part-time/parental leave, ...)</li> <li>• Promotion and expansion of team building and health-promoting measures (lectures, offer of sports activities, discounts ...)</li> </ul>
<b>Harassment and discrimination</b>	Expansion of the working atmosphere based on appreciation and mutual respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nominate a person of trust to act as a contact point for those affected, offering discreet support and counselling.</li> </ul>

### III. Annex

#### Virtual Vehicle GEP 2022-2023

#### 2. Gender & Diversity in Research and Innovation

Topic	Goals	Measures
<b>Equality and gender balance in research teams</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing the proportion of women at the Research Centre</li> <li>Raising awareness of the research teams and departments regarding gender balance</li> <li>Increasing the visibility of women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage further training for all employees on the topic of "Gender &amp; Diversity in Research and Innovation" with content specifically tailored to the research centre.</li> <li>Identification of topic-relevant external networks and promotion of participation for researchers of the company.</li> </ul>

#### 3. Gender and diversity-relevant measures for the organization of the research centre

Topic	Goals	Measures
<b>Guideline for gender-sensitive language</b>	Raising awareness for gender-equitable language use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of a guideline for gender-equitable language for corporate communication (website, publications, etc.)</li> <li>Promoting the application through awareness raising by the Equal Opportunities Team</li> </ul>