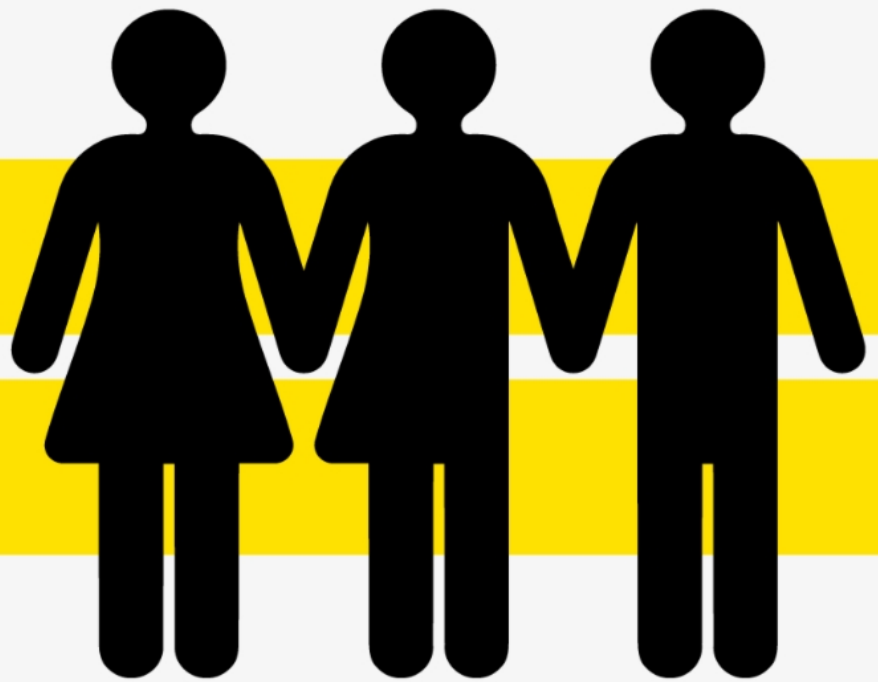


2022-2027

# Gender Equality Plan



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA  
MINISTRY FOR AGRICULTURE,  
FISHERIES AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

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## Definitions

**Female** refers to biologically based references to the sex of a woman

**Gender** refers to social attributes and opportunities associated with being female and male and to the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as to the relations between women and those between men

**Gender Identity** refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function, by medical, surgical, or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms

While the data collection for MAFA only considers sex-disaggregated data for men and women, it will be important to also consider non-binary gender for data collection in future publications, where possible. Non-binary is an umbrella term for gender identities that fall outside the gender binary of men or women. This includes individuals whose gender identity is neither exclusively man nor woman, a combination of man and woman or between or beyond genders.

**Male** refers to biologically based references to the sex of a man

**Sex** refers to the biological attribute that distinguish male, female and intersex

## Abbreviations

<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>DCS</b>	Director of Corporate Services
<b>EIGE</b>	European Institute for Gender Equality
<b>EPU</b>	Events and Promotion Unit
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GEP</b>	Gender Equality Plan
<b>MAFA</b>	Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, and Animal Rights
<b>NCPE</b>	National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
<b>OPM</b>	Office of the Prime Minister
<b>PDPID</b>	Policy Development and Programme Implementation Directorate

## 1.1 Introduction

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) was developed for the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries, and Animal Rights (MAFA) based on an analysis of an internal gender audit, meetings with stakeholder involved in the GEP implementation, as well as a review of the policies and practices presently applied by MAFA.

Presently, MAFA already has a commitment to follow the main areas covered by GEP's and has policies and practices in place which are aligned with the Maltese Legislation. Such principles covering the recommended areas of the GEP include:

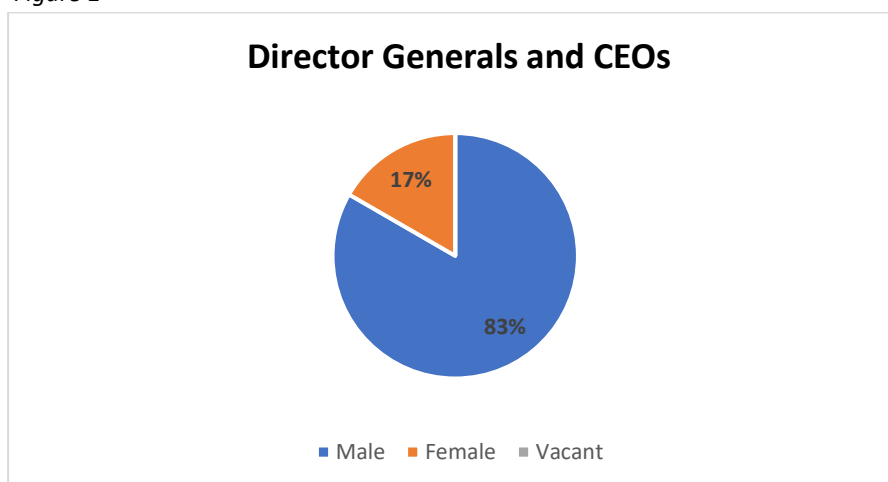
### 1. Work-life balance and organisational culture

- a. The provision of good working conditions for all staff, including staff members with special needs, which will allow all staff, irrespective of gender, to have the flexibility for a healthy work-life balance and a safe working environment to enable staff to reach optimal performance levels.
  - o These principles are also highlighted in the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap. 452 of the Laws of Malta) and subsidiary legislation (Organisation of Working Time Regulations – SL 452.87), the Occupational Health and Safety Authority Act (Cap. 424 of the Laws of Malta) and subsidiary legislation (Workplace (Minimum Health and Safety Requirements) Regulations – SL 424.15), the Government of Malta Policy Manual (Manual of Work-life balance measures).

### 2. Gender balance in Leadership and Decision Making

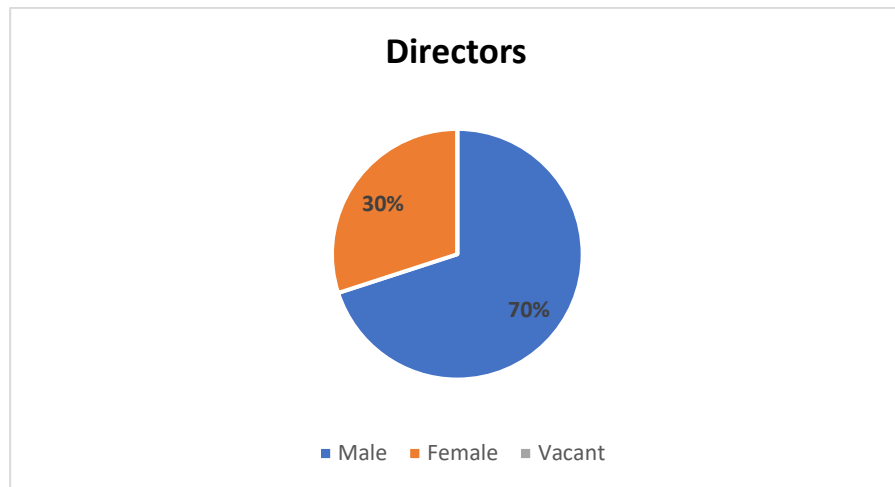
- a. Figure 1 illustrates the number of males and females in leading top management positions, namely General Directorship and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) posts.

Figure 1



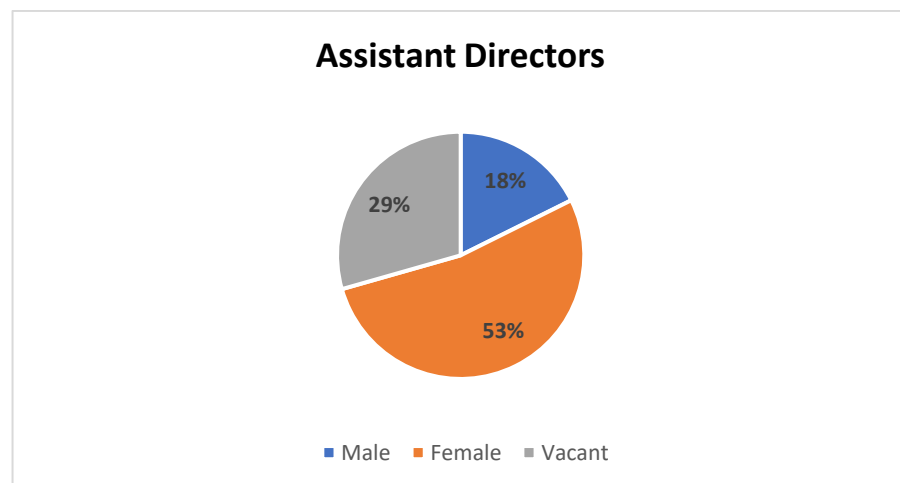
- b. Figure 2 illustrates the number of males and females holding Directorship Positions.

Figure 2



- c. Figure 3 illustrates the number of males and females holding Assistant Directorship Positions.

Figure 3



### 3. Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression

- a. Gender balance in recruitment and career progression ensuring equal opportunities at the stage of recruitment and subsequent career progression for all levels of staff, including top management grades.
- These principles are highlighted in the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap. 452 of the Laws of Malta) and subsidiary legislation (Equal Treatment in Employment Regulations - SL 452.95), and Section 2.5 of the Government of Malta Policy Manual (Manual on Industrial Relations and the Selection and Appointment Process under Delegated Authority in the Malta Public Service [Version 4.17])

#### 4. Measures against Gender-based Violence including Sexual Harassment

- a. Non-discriminatory treatment based on the grounds of religion or religious beliefs, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, political orientation and racial or ethnic origin.
  - These principles are also highlighted in the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap. 452 of the Laws of Malta) and subsidiary legislation (Equal Treatment in Employment Regulations - SL 452.95), the Equality for Men and Women Act (Cap. 456 of the Laws of Malta), the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act (Cap. 540 of the Laws of Malta).
- b. Gender matters in addressing gender-based violence that empower staff, amplify their voices, offer opportunities of redress, and promote acceptance of all gender identities and sexualities.
  - These principles are highlighted in Article 29 of the Employment and Industrial Relations Act (Cap. 452 of the Laws of Malta), the Equality for Men and Women Act (Cap. 456 of the Laws of Malta), Article 251A of the Criminal Code (Chapter 9 of the Laws of Malta).

Circular 15/2012 issued by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) also highlights the importance on gender mainstreaming asserting that gender mainstreaming *“will enhance the ability of employers to make the best use of human resources and improve productivity and competitiveness whilst giving employees the benefit equally in society. In practice it requires a pro-active approach, the need to identify those areas where any degree of inequality could potentially arise, assess the underlying causes of such inequalities and take necessary steps to bring about change.”*

In response to the guidelines of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), which aim to *“identify and implement innovative strategies to promote cultural change and equal opportunities”*, this GEP aims to identify gaps in MAFA’s current policies and practices and to introduce new measures that better support gender equality within the Ministry. Although MAFA already adopts numerous measures that promote gender equality, the actions identified are presented in Section 1.2 along with a plan of action presented in Section 1.3.

## 1.2 Actions and Objectives

This action plan has been developed by the Policy Development and Programme Implementation Directorate (PDPID) who took the lead and coordinated the consultation and drafting process following meetings with the Director for Corporate Services (DCS), the Line Departments and entities falling under the Ministry’s remit, together with consultation and approval by the Office of the Permanent Secretary. MAFA is also planning to appoint gender equality officers, who throughout the period covering this GEP, shall be overseeing and following up on progress on the challenges and actions which MAFA shall be implementing between the years 2022 to 2027.

The challenges and actions identified during the consultation process are outlined in Section 1.3. These will be monitored by MAFA’s Gender Equality Officers to ensure their implementation.

### 1.3 Challenges and Action Plan

*Action 1: To set up a Gender Equality Action Group within the Ministry.*

Key Area	Objectives	Challenges	Direct Target	Indirect Target	Timeline						
					2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	
<b>Gender Equality Action Plan</b>	To promote and implement the Gender Equality Plan, an Action Group is to be appointed with representatives from all MAFA Line Departments, Units and Agencies falling under the Ministry's remit.	To appoint one Gender Equality Officer from all MAFA Line Departments, Units and Agencies falling under the Ministry's remit in 2022	All staff	N/A	x						

The successful implementation of a Gender Equality Plan requires the support of an action group that will monitor and implement it.

**Goals:** During the first year of the plan, each line department will appoint one Gender Equality Officer.

**Action Plan:** The setting up of the Gender Equality Action Group will monitor the set action plan.



*Action 2: Strive for all gender representation and/or Gender Equality on Ministry Government Boards and Appointed Bodies.*

Key Area	Objectives	Challenges	Direct Target	Indirect Target	Timeline					
					2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Integrating the gender dimension</b>	To strive for all gender representation and/or Gender Equality on Ministry Government Boards and Appointed Bodies	To ensure that all genders are represented and/or equally represented in Ministry Boards and Appointed bodies.	Government Boards and Appointed Bodies	Ministry Policy and its sectoral beneficiaries	x	x	x	x	x	x

At present, in view that the agriculture and fisheries sectors are mostly male dominated sectors, government boards and appointed bodies include mostly male appointed representatives. However, the Ministry is also aware that female farmers and fishermen do exist and the Ministry aims to ensure partial or equal gender representation on its appointed boards and bodies.

**Goals:** The Ministry aims to ensure partial or equal gender representation on its appointed boards and bodies.

**Action Plan:** When appointing members on Government Boards and Bodies, the Ministry/Minister ensures all gender representation.

*Action 3: Increase nomination of female Ministry officers for ownership of budget, simplification, additional, electoral manifesto measures, and project leadership of EU funded projects.*

Key Area	Objectives	Challenges	Direct Target	Indirect Target	Timeline					
					2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Integrating the gender dimension</b>	To showcase all genders' capabilities in owning Ministry Budget, Simplification and Additional Measures, and leading EU funded projects.	To ensure that female Ministry officers are nominated for ownership of budget, simplification, additional, and EU Funded Project Leaderships.	All staff	Ministry Policy and Ministry's sectorial beneficiaries	x	x	x	X	x	x

Presently, the Ministry's Budget, Simplification and Additional Measures together with EU funded projects are mostly owned and led by male Ministry officers.

**Goals:** Increase the number of Budget, Simplification and Additional Measures owned and EU funded projects led by female Ministry officers in realising a more gender equal implementation approach.

**Action Plan:** When nominating owners for EU Funded Project Leadership and Measures such as Budget, Simplification, Additional and Electoral Manifesto, female representation is given equal consideration as that of males to ensure gender equality while showcasing all genders capabilities.

*Action 4: To ensure a mixed representation of genders on recruitment and interviewing boards.*

Key Area	Objectives	Challenges	Direct Target	Indirect Target	Timeline					
					2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression</b>	To promote gender balance in interviewing boards.	To ensure a mixed representation of genders on recruitment and interviewing boards	Applicants applying for MAFA Vacancy Calls for Applications	N/A	x	x	x	x	x	x

Presently, recruitment panels are made up of three persons as part of the selection and recruitment process. All interviewers and selection committees are fully versed with equality issues. Whenever possible, such recruitment and selection panels were gender balanced however it was identified that at times, such panels were composed of only male members.

**Goals:** Ensuring mixed representation of genders in interviewing panels.

**Action Plan:** In its efforts, MAFA will ensure that recruitment panels are made up of at least three panel members and will include both males and females. As such, this change in process will address the issue of gender representation and participation of both males and females in the recruitment and selection process of MAFA, and in its efforts, MAFA will further promote equality, diversity and inclusion in matters concerning recruitment and selection and promotion decisions.

*Action 5: Communication and implementation of gender sensitive content in all formal communication.*

Key Area	Objectives	Challenges	Direct Target	Indirect Target	Timeline					
					2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Integrating the gender dimension</b>	To promote inclusivity and address gender issues through training and communication	Communication and implementation of gender sensitive content in all formal communication	All staff	N/A	x	x	x	x	x	x

Although MAFA already makes use of gendered pronouns such as ‘he/she’ in its official documents, such pronouns are generally drafted in the traditional order of ‘he’ before ‘she’, therefore placing more importance on the male gender rather than the female gender. Furthermore, MAFA recognises that such language might not be gender inclusive, as it conforms to the binary gender system. In view of this, MAFA recognises that the additional use of inclusive pronouns such as ‘they/them’, will ensure that non-binary persons are not excluded and that all its staff members are addressed through language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity, and respect.

**Goals:** To be more inclusive on the basis of gender through the use of gender sensitive communication.

**Action Plan:** To amend any gender sensitive content in all MAFA formal communications.

*Action 6: To extend the possibility of teleworking and/or remote working for all staff members irrespective of gender and/or family responsibilities.*

Key Area	Objectives	Challenges	Direct Target	Indirect Target	Timeline					
					2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Work-life Balance and organisational culture</b>	To promote and implement measures that aim at improving the balance between work and personal life	To extend the possibility of teleworking and/or remote working for all staff members irrespective of gender and/or family responsibilities	All staff whose tasks can be performed remotely	Family members of Ministry's employees	x	x	x	x	x	x

MAFA already follows centrally published teleworking / remote working policies which enable office employees to enter into a voluntary agreement with MAFA wherein work which is normally performed at the employer's premises, is carried out from home on a regular basis. It was identified that the telework policy was only being extended to a particular segment of staff. The implementation of the Remote Working Policy will be adopted where duties can be performed remotely without impacting the operating performance of the employee.

**Goals:** Continue adopting an internal procedure for remote working which allows all eligible staff members to benefit from it.

**Action Plan:** MAFA is set to improve and enhance modern workplaces and increase employee flexibility and considering the lessons learned during the COVID pandemic, MAFA will extend the opportunity of teleworking and remote working to all its eligible members of staff in an effort to increase employee flexibility and provide a better balance between work and family life.

Subject to the completion of the probationary period and training, those employees applying for telework must be able to perform their tasks and duties remotely and will be permitted to apply for a maximum of ninety percent (90%) of their contracted hours to be worked away from the office. This measure shall continue to be accessible throughout until April 2023 when teleworking will be phased out and replaced with remote working.

*Action 7: Staff returning to work after availing themselves of parental leave, will have their service in grade reckoned for up to 12 months therefore their years in service will continue to accumulate in their favour when applying for career progression.*

Key Area	Objectives	Challenges	Direct Target	Indirect Target	Timeline					
					2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression</b>	To promote processes to support gender sensitive recruitment and career progression opportunities	Staff returning to work after availing themselves of parental leave, will have their service in grade reckoned for up to 12 months therefore their years in service will continue to accumulate in their favour	All staff	Families of staff	x	x	x	x	x	x

MAFA offers an array of measures to better support the work-life balance of its employees. Parental leave is an unpaid entitlement and is applicable to employees on the grounds of birth, adoption, legal custody, and foster care of children who are under ten (10) years of age. Applicants must have completed their probationary period and may utilise parental leave in aggregates of four (4) month, six (6) month, nine (9) month periods or the maximum of twelve (12) months. Clause 3.10.2 of the Manual in Resourcing Policies and Procedures establishes that where the full one-year parental leave entitlement is availed of, the officer shall be considered to have availed of the one-year reckonable leave period for family-friendly measures.

**Goals:** To provide a better opportunity for career progression.

**Action Plan:** In considering this matter and to further eradicate any barriers which might be hindering staff members from availing themselves of this measure, employees availing themselves of parental leave, shall continue to accumulate their service in grade in their favour when considering career progression. Such measure, which is normally availed of by female employees, will further support the role of females within MAFA.

*Action 8: Promote Public, Governmental and/or NGO gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination services to Ministry officers.*

Key Area	Objectives	Challenges	Direct Target	Indirect Target	Timeline					
					2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Gender-Based Violence, harassment and discrimination</b>	To empower staff to be aware and seek assistance for any gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination	To ensure that all Ministry officers are aware about and where to access all available services related to gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination.	All staff	Victims family members	x	x	x	x	x	x

MAFA, through the centrally People and Standards Division already has in place a policy that deals with a harassment and a bullying-free workplace. It provides a procedural framework to deal with cases of bullying and harassment at the workplace.

**Goals:** Ensure that MAFA officers are empowered to be aware when to seek assistance for any gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination.

**Action Plan:** Promote Public, Governmental and/or NGO gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination services to Ministry officers.

*Action 9: To organize and/or attend gender equality, diversity and inclusion training and information talks by public service bodies, competent authorities, service providers and/or NGOs.*

Key Area	Objectives	Challenges	Direct Target	Indirect Target	Timeline					
					2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Empowering the Ministry's Officers gender equality, diversity and inclusion skills set</b>	Improving the Ministry officers' skills set and achieving a higher sense of respect, acceptance and tolerance towards diversity within the Ministry.	Organize and/or encourage Ministry officers to attend gender equality, diversity and inclusion training, and information talks by public service bodies, competent authorities, service providers and/or NGOs through which MAFA Line Departments can train their employees on what is and isn't acceptable in the workplace.	MAFA Officers	Family members	x	x	x	x	x	x
				General Public						

The successful implementation of the GEP depends on the direction set by the Ministry's top management officers in organizing and/or encouraging their officers in attending gender equality, diversity and inclusion training, and information talks in the ultimate aim of improving the Ministry officers' skills set and achieving a higher sense of acceptance, tolerance towards diversity within the Ministry.

**Goals:** Improving the Ministry officers' skills set and achieving a higher sense of respect, acceptance and tolerance towards diversity within the Ministry.

**Action Plan:** MAFA Line Departments and Agencies management are encouraged to organize and /or facilitate their officers' attendance to gender equality, diversity and inclusion related training and information talks by public service bodies, competent authorities, service providers and/or NGOs.



*Action 10: Address gender stereotyping in the agriculture and fisheries sectors.*

Key Area	Objectives	Challenges	Direct Target	Indirect Target	Timeline					
					2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Integrating the gender dimension</b>	To address gender stereotyping in agriculture and fisheries sectors	To promote female farmers and fishermen in order to address the public's perception and stereotyping in the agrifood industry.	Female agrifood producers	General Public	x	x	x	x	x	x

Presently, in view that the agriculture and fisheries sectors are mostly male dominated sectors, a gender stereotype that the agriculture and fisheries sectors are just for males does exist. Through this action, the Ministry intends to promote the already existing female farmers and fishermen while showcasing that females are also capable in performing the tasks and delivering the same expected results in these sectors as males.

**Goals:** Addressing gender stereotyping in agriculture and fisheries sectors by promoting female farmers and fishers in Ministry's promotional material and campaigns.

**Action Plan:** Promoting female farmers and fishers in Ministry's promotional material and campaigns.

*Action 11: Tying supervisors' performance bonuses to diversity and inclusion objectives, and the implementation of this GEP.*

Key Area	Objectives	Challenges	Direct Target	Indirect Target	Timeline					
					2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>GEP Implementation</b>	To ensure the inclusion of diversity and inclusion objectives and the implementation of this Gender Equality Plan across all Ministry Line Departments and Agencies falling under the Ministry's remit.	Ministry Management officers (CEOs, DGs, Directors and Assistant Directors) are encouraged to include diversity and inclusion objectives and any actions identified in this Gender Equality Plan in their Annual Performance Plans on which their performance bonus rating is assessed.	Ministry Management Officers (CEOs, DGs, Directors and Assistant Directors)	MAFA Officers	x	x	x	x	x	x

The introduction and successful implementation of the GEP depends on the direction set by the Ministry's top management officers.

**Goals:** Ensure that the Ministry's Management Officers take ownership and ensure the inclusion of diversity and inclusion objectives and the implementation of this Gender Equality Plan within the Ministry's Line Departments and Agencies.

**Action Plan:** Ministry Management officers (CEOs, DGs, Directors and Assistant Directors) are encouraged to include diversity and inclusion objectives and any actions identified in this Gender Equality Plan in their Annual Performance Plans on which their performance bonus rating is assessed.

## 1.4 Data Collection and Monitoring

For the purpose of this GEP, the data in relation to each action shall be collected and monitored as follows:

- **Action 1: To set up a Gender Equality Action Group within the Ministry.**

During the first year of the GEP, each Line Department and/or Agency within the Ministry will appoint an officer to act as an Equality Officer. The selected officers will form the Gender Equality Action Group and will be responsible to monitor the GEP.

- **Action 2: Strive for all gender representation and/or Gender Equality on Ministry Government Boards and Appointed Bodies.**

The Gender Equality Action Group will collect the data on an annual basis by requesting records at the DCS and the Office of the Permanent Secretary.

- **Action 3: Increase nomination of female Ministry officers for ownership of budget, simplification, additional, electoral manifesto measures, and project leadership of EU funded projects.**

The Gender Equality Action Group will collect the data on annual basis by requesting records through the officer responsible for the compilation of the monthly reporting of each measure in the Office of the Permanent Secretary.

Data regarding the EU funded projects can be collected through data already available within the PDPID.

- **Action 4: To ensure a mixed representation of genders on recruitment and interviewing boards.**

This measure can be implemented upon the appointment of recruitment selection boards by the DCS and the Permanent Secretary. The Gender Equality Action Group can request this readily available data to the DCS on an annual basis.

- **Action 5: Communication and implementation of gender sensitive content in all formal communication.**

The Gender Equality Action Group will collect the data on an annual basis by requesting all Ministry Line Departments and Agencies to provide the list of official documentation amended during the previous particular calendar year.

- **Action 6: To extend the possibility of teleworking and/or remote working for all staff members irrespective of gender and/or family responsibilities.**

Data is collected by the DCS upon application and the Gender Equality Action Group can request this readily available data to the DCS on an annual basis.

- **Action 7: Staff returning to work after availing themselves of parental leave, will have their service in grade reckoned for up to 12 months therefore their years in service will continue to accumulate in their favour when applying for career progression.**

Data is collected by the DCS upon application and the Gender Equality Action Group can request this readily available data to the DCS on an annual basis.

- **Action 8: Promote Public, Governmental and/or NGO gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination services to Ministry officers**

Data for this action can be collected by the Gender Equality Action Group on an annual basis through;

1. The number of Ministry circulars issued by the Ministry Registry within the DCS,
2. Training sessions organized by each Line Department / Agency and
3. The number of Ministry activities such as AGRIFAIR and *L-Imnarja*, in which Public/Governmental bodies and NGOs participated in through the Events and Promotion Unit (EPU).

- **Action 9: To organize and/or attend gender equality, diversity and inclusion training and information talks by public service bodies, competent authorities, service providers and/or NGOs.**

The Gender Equality Action Group can request this data from each Ministry's Line Department and Agencies on an annual basis.

- **Action 10: Address gender stereotyping in the agriculture and fisheries sectors.**

Data and information about content and costs about any Ministry publicity campaign is collected by the EPU and the Gender Equality Action Group can request this readily available data to the EPU on an annual basis.

- **Action 11: Tying supervisors' performance bonuses to diversity and inclusion objectives, and the implementation of this GEP.**

This measure can be implemented during the annual submission of Performance Plans to the Office of the Permanent Secretary. The Gender Equality Action Group can request performance plans through the Office of the Permanent Secretary on an annual basis subject to all necessary data protection permissions required.

## 1.5 Reporting

The challenges and actions identified in section 1.3, through data collected as explained in section 1.4 will enable the Gender Equality Action Group to compile an annual Gender Equality Progress Report to be submitted to the Office of the Permanent Secretary by not later than the end of March of each following year.



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