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# **Gender Equality Plan**

## **2024**

**Rhodes, Greece**

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## List of Revisions

Date	Revision	Reason
26.07.2024	Fundamental publication	

## List of abbreviations

EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
HR	Human Resources
PES	Public Employment Service
RP	Rhodes Project
SCE	Social Cooperative Enterprise

## Executive Summary

The Gender Equality Plan 2024 has been prepared and submitted by the Rhodes Centre for History and Social Research- Rhodes Project SCE (hereafter RP) gender equality working group; it has been approved by the General Assembly, disseminated within the organisation and shall remain openly available on the RP website. Monitoring and evaluation of the GEP is ongoing and the annual evaluation of the plan is expected to be performed in July 2025. The plan includes the gender equality assessments, the priorities, measures and objectives of the organisation and its Code of Conduct. The RP has presented ten commitments in acknowledgement of the importance of gender equality in its organisational structure.

The dedicated working group within the RP has been thoroughly examining relevant national and European legal frameworks and international conventions and declarations in order to ensure the compliance of the Gender Equality Plan with national and international standards, as well as its full implementation. The plan has been based on widely available and authoritative resources, in order to ensure transparency and continuity for future annual GEP's.

The data analysis in this GEP report focuses on three particular indicators: the RP's staff by sex, the RP's staff sex by function and the RP's staff sex by contractual relation. Moreover, we have looked at the performance of the RP in comparison to EU - level data by assessing the EU 'She Figures' report (Gender in Research and Innovation: statistics and indicators).

Despite the overall positive outlook of gender issues in the RP, the GEP identifies some challenges and shortcomings. In addressing these, the RP has made specific organisational, budgetary, and planning commitments, the progress of which will be reviewed in July 2025.

The RP shall ensure that gender equality information and internal procedures for addressing discrimination are easily accessible. Continuous awareness and engagement from the RP community are crucial for tackling biases and monitoring the GEP's effectiveness. The RP is committed to the analysis and monitoring of its reports to assess the achievement of its gender equality goals.

Rhodes, Greece  
26.07.2024



Ioannis V Papageorgiou  
President of the Administrative Committee

# 1. The Main Framework for the GEP and further analysis

## 1.1 About the Rhodes Project: structure, central mission, culture

The RP is a Research Centre established in 2013 on the island of Rhodes, Greece. It has been established as a Social Cooperative Enterprise (SCE) under the Greek law (4019/2011, now replaced by 4430/2016). It was the first private research centre in the South Aegean region and one of the first - if not the first - in Greece. Social Cooperative Enterprises are entities that undertake “sustainable development” activities or supply “services of general interest” for collective and social benefit purposes, and whose social mission takes precedence over their financial profit.

The RP and Social Cooperative Enterprises in general, are part of Greece’s social economy ecosystem (Υπουργείο Εργασίας και Κοινωνικής Ασφάλισης, 2021); they are obliged by law to reinvest the majority of their profits into their social and environmental objectives. All activities of the RP are based on the principles of solidarity, gender equality, social progress, equitable collaboration, and democratic participation in its governance.

Social research and social innovation are the RP’s main goals. The ultimate aim and social mission of the RP is to create sustainable jobs within humanities and social sciences, with a particular emphasis on Research & Development (R&D) in Greek island regions.

Regarding its organisational structure, RP is a small size SCE consisting of 16 employees and collaborators. There is one (1) Research Director responsible for scientific research, an Administrative Committee (consisting of 3 members) overlooking matters of administrative nature and a General Assembly (consisting of 7 members) responsible for the decision-making. According to the statute and the national law for Social Cooperative Enterprises, most employees are also shareholders and therefore participate in the decision-making process.

To be more specific, the RP’s form of governance is democratic and participatory, though it is important to make certain clarifications regarding the decision making on an administrative and scientific level. The employees who are also shareholders of the SCE make decisions of an administrative nature, either through the Administrative Committee or the General Assembly. Those employees who are not shareholders do not have decision-making power on matters of administrative nature. On a scientific level, all employees (whether shareholders or not) participate equally in discussions - who has the final call on such matters is determined on a project-to-project basis based on expertise, experience and job description.

As for collaborations, the RP actively pursues synergies and partnerships with various organisations (e.g. academic and other research institutions), in order to best achieve its aims and missions.

### **1.1.1 Geosocial Context**

As mentioned above, the RP is based on the island of Rhodes, which is part of the Dodecanese islands in the southeastern Aegean. Its geographical location makes the RP a unique SCE, as its main mission is to create sustainable jobs within humanities and social sciences, while its location is characterised by fragmentation, peripherality and particular economic conditions. This means that island economies experience a series of obstacles including (Monastiriotis & Markova, 2009):

1. difficulty of communication with the economic centres,
2. operation at lower efficiency which contributes further to their economic remoteness,
3. the market alternatives in local sourcing are minimal, leading to informal networks that limit entrepreneurialism and social innovation,
4. young people and especially women have a higher propensity to migrate, leaving the socio-demographic structure of remote islands more skewed towards older and more male-dominated structures, and
5. resistance to adaptation and socio-economic change.

It is important to mention that since 2013 the RP is certainly contributing positively to the island's economy by:

- a. promoting scientific research and social innovation,
- b. advancing gender equality and supporting women's employment,
- c. promoting socio-economic development, and
- d. being instrumental in sustainability and maintaining an ecosystem within the framework of the social economy.

## 1.2 Regulatory Frameworks & the Rhodes Project's Code of Conduct

The RP takes into consideration the national and European legislation regarding gender equality, including the rules of the Horizon Europe programme, as well as several international conventions and declarations of gender equality.

### 1.2.1 National and European level

On a national level, the RP, in drafting the present GEP, takes into consideration the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2021-2025) of Greece, as it has been drafted by the General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (Υπουργείο Εργασίας και Κοινωνικής Ασφάλισης, 2021).

On a European level, the guiding principles are contoured by the Gender Equality Strategy of the European Commission (2020-2025). Within the same framework, of particular importance is the Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (GEPs), as published by the Horizon Europe programme (European Commission, 2021), and includes:

- *Work-life balance and organisational culture*
- *Gender balance in leadership and decision-making*
- *Gender equality in recruitment and career progression*
- *Integration of the gender dimension into research*
- *Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment*

### 1.2.2 International level

On an international level, the RP observes several international conventions and declarations relevant to gender equality. To start with, the RP takes into consideration the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations (United Nations, 2023) and specifically the following goals:

- achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal 5);
- promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (Goal 8).

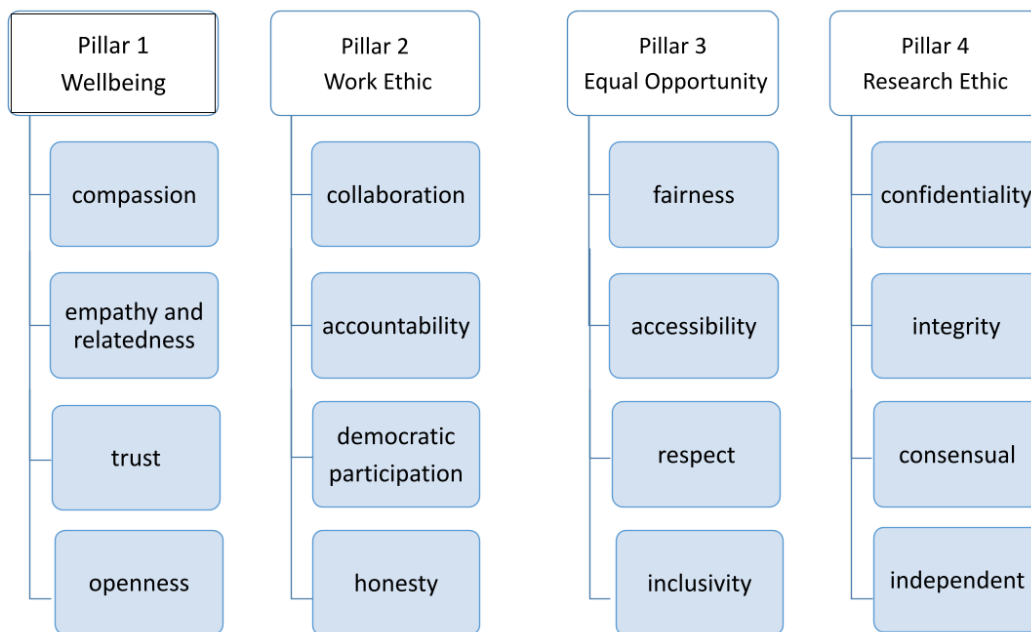
Moreover, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace (BPfA)

1995 on the one hand, and the Istanbul Convention on the other, are both critical in shaping the RP’s GEP. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the RP also takes into consideration the International Labour Organization’s Convention on Gender Equality, as it sets the principles on the labour market, promotes gender equality and supports women’s career advancements in the world of work.

### 1.2.3 Rhodes Project Code of Conduct

Prior to analysing GEP content areas, it is necessary to examine the RP’s Code of Conduct and understand the core values of its governance. The Code of Conduct consists of four main pillars which will be briefly presented and analysed below.

*Chart 4: Rhodes Project core values*



The RP’s first pillar focuses on individuals’ well-being and has therefore defined a set of values that best represent its Code of Conduct. Individuals working for or with the RP need to exemplify compassion and be empathetic towards others. Moreover, there is an ‘Open Door’ policy where everyone should feel confident to discuss challenging matters occurring either on a professional or personal level. There is a zero tolerance towards behaviours that are not aligned with the values defined in the RP’s Code of Conduct.

Continuing with the second pillar that defines the RP’s values on its work ethic, collaboration among employees and partners is one of the most important elements of the RP’s effective organisation. Accountability and honesty is promoted among all staff and stakeholders and democratic participation is both a core value and principle in the RP’s organisational culture.

The third pillar is about equal opportunities, meaning that the RP's aim is to support all staff, taking into consideration important personal parameters, including gender, and to avoid discriminatory behaviours. At all levels within the social enterprise or with partnerships, individuals should be respectful and embody fairness. Inclusivity and accessibility are of vital importance and those not complying with these values, either staff or stakeholders, cannot be part of the team or partner with the RP.

Finally, the fourth pillar of research ethics has been designed to demonstrate that the Rhodes Project is a well-grounded organisation and a trustworthy source of information and centre of knowledge production. The RP takes its research work seriously and ensures that confidentiality and integrity are at the core of every research project. The research that the RP conducts and the services it provides are consensual and independent, as there are a number of internal step-by-step procedures ensuring the reliability of business processes.

## **2. Methodology & Data Analysis**

### **2.1 Methodology & Validity of the data**

As mentioned earlier, the RP is a small sized social enterprise consisting of 16 employees and collaborators. Prior to analysing the data collected, it is critical to refer to the methodology used. The data used refer to the averages from the years of 2022 to 2024. The three-year period is used to address the low personnel turnover due to the fragmentation, peripherality and particular economic conditions of the RP's geographical location and the consequent challenges in finding and hiring personnel. Therefore, the available data are used as an average over a three-year period. Using this as a baseline, RP is committed to performing the same exercise on a yearly basis from now on, according to the Horizon Criteria and EU requirements.

In terms of the validity of employment data, the GEP uses its own data collected by the RP's HR department. Due to the multiplicity of legal types of collaboration with the RP (e.g. freelancing, employment contract, affiliation), where some of them are formal, but reported to different authorities (e.g. independent contractors report to the Tax Authority, whereas employees report to the PES), while others completely informal (e.g. affiliation), the external validation of the data used is practically impossible. Therefore, data from the internal HR system will be used. Such data are openly available to any interested parties upon request, and upon signing a Non Disclosure Agreement.



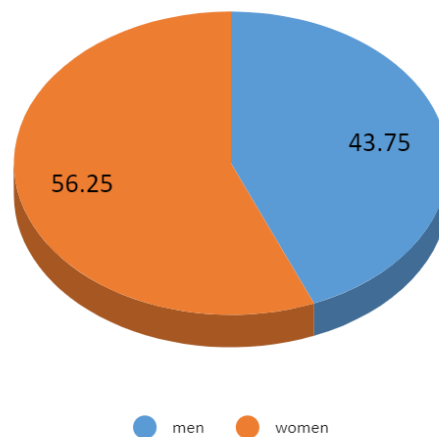
## 2.2 Data Analysis and case-specific focus

Taking into consideration the peculiarities of the company's geo-social predicament and their effect upon hiring and staff turnover, the RP has chosen to focus on three particular indicators: RP staff by sex, RP staff sex by function, RP staff sex by contractual relation.

Starting from the first indicator, it provides a general overview of the gender disparities within the organisation. Chart 1 makes it evident that taking into account the overall number of collaborators, the RP employs more women than men.

*Chart 1: Rhodes Project Staff by sex 2022-2024 (average)*

Staff by sex 2022-2024 (average)



Nonetheless, a deeper analysis is required, as evidenced by the second indicator regarding the distribution of sex of the RP's collaborators by function. This indicator is useful to better understand how men and women are positioned within the organisation. Looking into Chart 2 one notices that the role of "main researcher" is dominated by male staff members; at the same time, adjunct and assistant researchers are exclusively women. This leads to the conclusion that career advancement of women to central positions needs to be improved. On the other hand, expert collaborators are more or less evenly balanced between men and women.

Chart 2: Rhodes Project Sex by Function 2022-2024 (average)

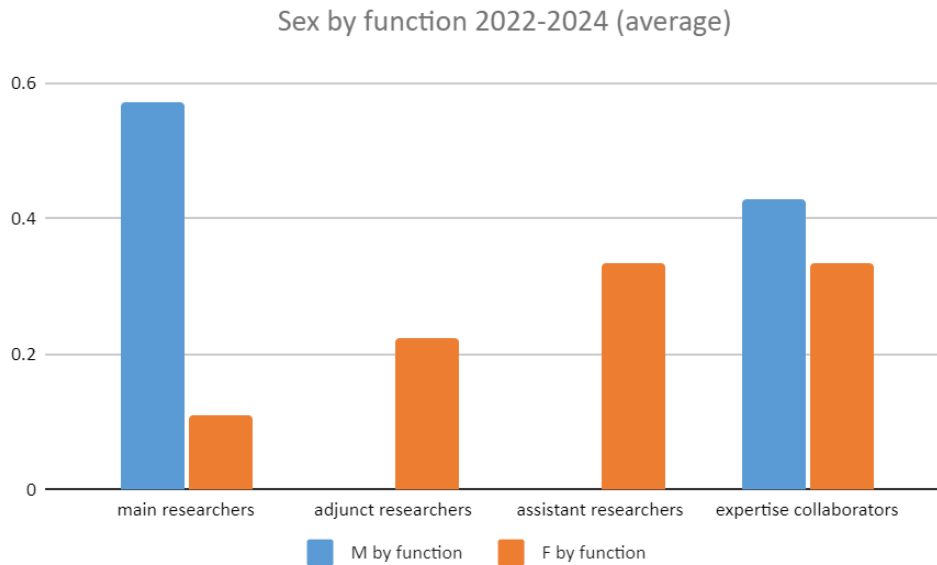
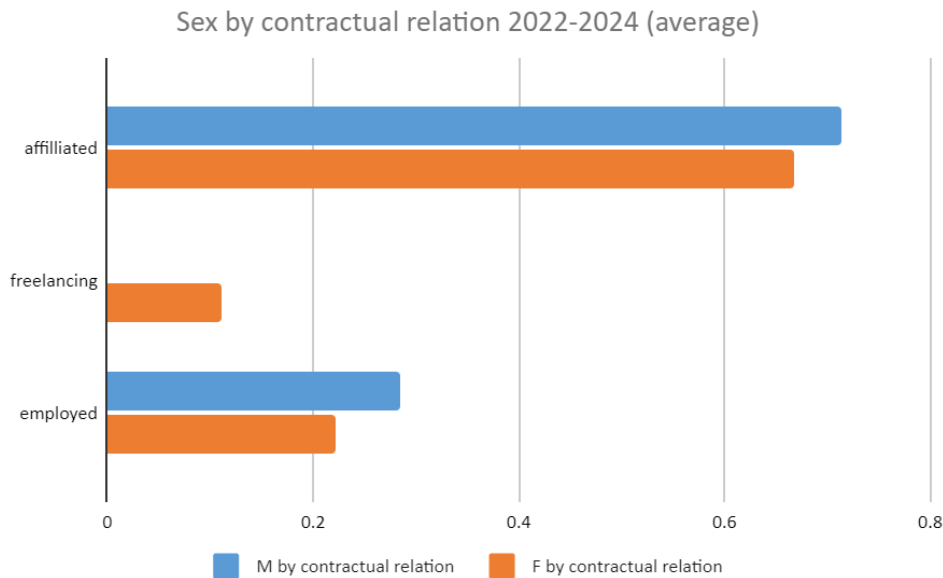


Chart 3: Rhodes Project Sex by Contractual Relation 2022-2024 (average)



Finally, the third indicator regards the RP’s staff sex by contractual relation. It presents a relatively small variance between male and female collaborators that are employed and affiliated, while freelancing collaborators are only females. Given that freelancing is deemed to be concealing salaried employment in a precarious setting, the RP puts effort into minimising the freelancing work relations only to the collaborators that are evidently freelancers.

It is worth looking at the RP's performance against EU-level data. According to the EU 'She Figures' report (Gender in Research and Innovation: statistics and indicators), in 2018 women represented  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the total population of researchers, which equates to 32.8% on the EU27 level (European Commission, 2021). For Greece, the proportion of women researchers in 2018 was 37.82%. Considering RP's available data and opportunity sampling, it appears that the RP performs relatively better compared to the EU and national Levels. Nonetheless, deeper analysis, and especially the one that derives from the second indicator, stresses the fact that the RP needs to intensify and systematise gender equality and equal treatment efforts at all levels (both on functions and on contractual relations) in order to further improve gender equality treatment.

Turning to a case-specific focus, irrespective of its challenges in the geo-social environment, and its shortcomings in terms of the composition of its human resources, the RP has demonstrated its stable willingness to address gender issues in the labour market. More specifically, the RP has been continuously cooperating with the Public Employment Service in Greece and the University of the Aegean in order to hire young women under 29 years of age, aiming to support their career development and address female unemployment. Indeed, within the period under focus, seven young women have done internships with the RP and three of them remained affiliated with the RP. Moreover, a plethora of the RP's projects include gender equality dimensions. For example, the Cowork4YOUTH research project focused on enhancing youth employment in less developed EEA regions, where particular emphasis was placed on young unemployed mothers. On a regional and municipal level, the RP's Research Director is a member of Rhodes municipality's Gender Equality Committee (as provided for by Greek law 4604/2019 on gender equality), which overlooks policies on gender equality and consults on matters of this nature.

### **3. Performance against Horizon Europe GEP criteria**

The present plan examines the RP's managerial and operational structure against compliance to the Horizon Europe GEP criteria:

#### *Work-life balance and organisational culture*

Following the paradigm introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, the RP generally supports flexible working arrangements, meaning that staff are able to work seamlessly from home and at the RP premises.

This is expected to allow employees to manage their time and workload regardless of the place from which work is performed. For the time being this is reserved for experienced staff. Adjunct researchers and interns are not given this opportunity, given that they require support and supervision. The RP is looking into methods for allowing the extension of flexible working to the junior ranks of the organisation too.

In addition, the RP abides by legal provisions regarding parental leave and extends them to those employees who might have any type of caring responsibilities.

The RP is examining ways to make the reintegration of employees more sustainable, following career breaks and academic studies.

#### *Gender balance in leadership and decision making*

The Rhodes Project values the contributions of all employees and does not discriminate on the basis of sex or any other social dimensions that might intersect with it (e.g. gender, religion, ethnicity, race, economic status, education etc). All employees and collaborators, as well as external parties upon request, have access to gender-related documentation, reports, and tools created by or concerning the RP organisation. At the same time, the RP is institutionally committed to ensuring that contributions by female staff are equally visible.

As per the administration of research, its decentralised system of governance per project ensures that women are given the opportunity to shape its development by participating in decision making and lead based on their expertise.

Regarding the organisational administration, a known issue is the small participation of women in the elections for the RP's Administrative Committee, and generally the low percentage of women participating in the company structure of the RP as shareholders. Currently the Administrative Committee consists of three men and the General Assembly of two women out of seven members. The selection process or appointment of women in the RP's Administrative Committee and General Assembly is to be improved by the end of 2025 on both leadership and decision making processes.

Current measures include informing employees or collaborators of the enterprise's statute, answering any relevant questions, and providing mini seminars to women collaborators if necessary.

#### *Gender equality in recruitment and career progression*

As can be observed by the aforementioned indicators, although the recruitment of women and men is similar in numbers, women are recruited in lower ranking positions, and they lack the potential for career progression.

In terms of recruitment, the RP is already publicly advertising the selection procedures for new job positions on all of its communication channels, making sure everything is transparent and understandable. Leadership and staff are really cautious of language bias, and the Code of Conduct certainly does play a role in defining the correct values that the organisation needs the applicants to have. Moreover, the RP supports the recruitment of less privileged and vulnerable social groups. Such intentions notwithstanding, it must be noted that their recruitment is subject to constraints in both locally available infrastructure and the local labour market. Although such structural constraints are not within the RP's power to change - at least not immediately - the company is always willing and ready to discuss ways of overcoming obstacles.

Regarding career progression, the RP acknowledges the fact that its female staff have evidently lower possibilities in advancing the internal research career ladder. Following the Code of Conduct, the RP has no objection whatsoever to their career progression. Nonetheless, the incorporation of the RP as a social enterprise sets number limits in the employment of non-shareholders. Therefore, the room for improvement is dependent on the participation of more women in the shareholding structure of the company.

Having those shortcomings and challenges in mind, the Rhodes Project commits to:

- Attract more women employees. Through an Annual Open Research Day at its premises, the RP will increase the visibility of the social enterprise, attract new talent - especially women researchers - and network with everyone interested in meeting the company's staff.
- Participate in public funding schemes from the Public Employment Service in Greece or elsewhere to receive further financial support and advice on employment of less privileged and vulnerable social groups.
- Extending remote work to vulnerable groups (where applicable) regardless of their experience or expertise.
- Convincing more women to join the company membership through training and one-to-one daily mentoring micro-sessions to its women employees and collaborators. In this way, the RP will ensure that women have equal opportunities in leading positions within the organisation.

#### *Integration of the gender dimension into research*

Both employees and collaborators are aware of key terminology when running projects or conducting research. The provision of integration of the values of diversity and inclusion in proposal designs is already in place. The RP, as mentioned above, has delivered research specifically concerning women's participation

in the labour market (projects: Cowork4YOUTH, YOUTHShare), or taking into account the voice of women (projects: UnDRho, InCulture).

The RP is committed to continually integrating the gender dimension into research.

#### Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

The RP has in place a Code of Conduct that establishes and codifies the expected behaviours of employees and collaborators. Onboarding and internal processes attached to the Code of Conduct establish how all members of the organisation can report instances of sexual harassment. The secretary of the Administrative Committee has been appointed with the responsibility of receiving and investigating relevant grievances as well as any type of misconduct in the workplace and acting accordingly. In case the Secretary of the Committee is on leave or otherwise unavailable, the Treasurer is then responsible for these matters.

The fact that the RP's Research Director is a member of Rhodes Municipality Gender Equality Committee makes the RP accountable not only internally, according to the previous process, but also externally.

The RP is committed to continuing the operation of this grievances investigation mechanism and further supporting it.

## 4. Commitments - Further Investigation

The RP is hereby committed to acknowledging the importance of gender equality in its organisational structure. This is materialised in the following particular commitments:

### 1. Annual GEP

The RP will be re-performing the GEP exercise annually, during July of each year. Using the present plan as a baseline, the following years' GEPs will also study how the company has performed in the preceding year. For the reasons explained above, the focus period will be the three preceding years.

### 2. GEP as research

The performance of the GEP will be handled as a research report. In other words, it will be an independently delivered study, with a specific, pre-committed budget, and conducted by expert staff, collaborating as a working group.

### **3. Review of the GEP**

Each year's GEP, including the present one, will be presented and ratified by the regular General Assembly of the company.

### **4. Further work-life balance facilitation measures:**

- researching methods to allow the extension of flexible working to the junior ranks of the organisation
- looking into ways to make the reintegration of employees after career breaks and academic studies sustainable.

### **5. Measures for more gender balanced decision making and leadership:**

- Informing employees or collaborators of the enterprise's statute, answering any relevant questions and providing mini seminars to women collaborators, if necessary, in order to improve women's participation in the RP's governance structures.

### **6. Measures promoting gender equality in recruitment and career progression:**

- Attracting more women employees. Through an Annual Open Research Day at its premises, the RP will increase the visibility of the social enterprise, attract new talent - especially women researchers - and network with everyone interested in meeting the company's staff.
- Participating in public funding schemes from the Public Employment Service in Greece or elsewhere to receive further financial support and advice on employment of less privileged and vulnerable social groups.
- Extending remote work to vulnerable groups (where applicable) regardless of their experience of expertise.
- Convincing more women in joining the company membership through training and one-to-one daily mentoring micro-sessions to its women employees and collaborators. In this way, RP is ensuring that women have equal opportunities in leading positions within the organisation.

### **7. RP will continue integrating the gender dimension into research.**

### **8. RP will continue the operation of its grievances investigation mechanism and further support it.**

**9. RP will be investing part of its budget in gender equality. The annual percentage is to be decided by the regular General Assembly in the framework of the annual planning discussion. The fields of investment will be:**

- Funding the annual GEP
- Increasing the percentage of female staff in higher research ranks
- Continuing the inclusion of gender issues in its research projects

**10. RP commits to further investigating gender issues in:**

- Technology Innovation: Future technologies leveraging AI and machine learning pose specific challenges and offer particular solutions in terms of gender issues. The RP will be vigilant of such developments and will promote the study of gender issues.
- Collaboration/ Partnerships: the RP will engage in international networks to exchange best practices, strategies, and innovations in gender equality, fostering a collaborative approach to global challenges. Partnering with global institutions for joint research projects could help understand and solve gender-related issues across different cultural and socio-economic contexts.
- Economic growth: The adoption of gender-responsive budgeting practices will ensure equitable allocation of resources and address disparities. Moreover, by gaining access to international funding opportunities and resources, the RP will support gender equality initiatives and social innovations. By partnering with women-led projects, initiatives and start-ups, the RP will recognize their potential to contribute significantly to economic growth.
- Environmental degradation: the RP could promote green technology and innovation that offer sustainable solutions to environmental challenges and protect cultural heritage, while providing new economic opportunities to vulnerable social groups. It is crucial to include gender issues in that framework and the RP will commit its efforts to that.
- Political instability: the RP will be furthering its knowledge on developing crises preparedness and response plans that consider the unique needs and contributions of different genders, ensuring effective and equitable solutions during times of political instability and crisis.



## 5. Concluding Remarks

The Rhodes Centre for History and Social Research (Rhodes Project - RP) has implemented its 2024 Gender Equality Plan (GEP), approved by the General Assembly and displayed on its website. The plan includes the gender equality assessment, priorities, objectives, and the RP's Code of Conduct, aiming for sustainable gender equality in humanities and social sciences. A dedicated working group ensures compliance with national and European laws and international conventions. The GEP, which is reviewed annually, focuses on sex data across roles and contractual relations, benchmarked against the EU 'She Figures' report. The RP ensures that gender equality information and internal procedures for addressing discrimination are easily accessible. Continuous awareness and engagement from the RP community are crucial for tackling biases and monitoring the GEP's effectiveness. RP is committed to the analysis and monitoring of its reports to assess the achievement of its gender equality goals.

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