



EEAS Gender and Equal Opportunities Strategy 2018-2023



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Foreword

The workforce of the European External Action Service (EEAS) represents a unique collective of individuals. Working in Brussels and in all corners of the world, the EEAS brings together a rich diversity of staff recruited from EU institutions, from EU Member States and partner countries as well as local employees across our 139 EU Delegations and Offices. When taking up my duties as Secretary General of the EEAS, I intended to focus my attention on the strongest asset of the EEAS – its workforce – in view of identifying ways to further improve our joint efforts and to make full use of the high potential, experience, dedication and professionalism of our personnel. I strongly believe that this is only possible when gender equality and equal opportunities prevail across the organisation.

Despite undoubted progress since the inception of the EEAS in 2010, it is clear that we can and should do better in ensuring gender equality and equal opportunities throughout the service.

The values of equality, diversity, inclusion and respect for private life are fundamental to what we represent as an organisation and to what we stand for as a foreign and security policy actor. I expect the EEAS to lead by example on all these counts. Therefore, I have decided to initiate a structured and inclusive process to develop a strategic framework for promoting gender equality and equal opportunities for all members, in all functions and at all levels of the EEAS. This important work has been initiated in the context of an internal Task Force on Gender and Equal Opportunities, chaired by Ms Birgitte Markussen and comprising representatives of all segments of the EEAS. I take this opportunity to thank all colleagues involved in the Task Force, who have volunteered to dedicate their time and efforts to this joint endeavour as well as to thank all external experts who have helped our work with their valuable advice and orientations.

I commend this ambitious, but realistic framework to all members of our organisation, and I expect every one of us to take ownership, responsibility and initiative for its implementation.

Helga Maria Schmid
EEAS Secretary General

1. Introduction

"We will develop more creative approaches to diplomacy. This also means promoting the role of women in peace efforts – from implementing the UNSC Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security to improving the EU's internal gender balance". (The Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, 2016)

The present document outlines the main aspects of an EEAS Strategy on Gender and Equal Opportunities for the period 2018-2023, elaborating on its priorities, rationale, objectives and suggested actions/means of implementation.

The EEAS' vision on how to achieve gender balance and equal opportunities for all its staff is in line with common European values and objectives, and echoes similar visions developed across the EU institutions.

Benefitting from the unique mix of the EEAS' workforce from EU Member States, partner countries and local staff in Headquarters and worldwide in 139 EU Delegations, this Strategy engages and encourages staff to expand their horizons, promote equality, diversity and inclusivity and counteract bias and discriminatory behaviour at work. Gender balance and inclusive cultures are proven to benefit women and men's health and job satisfaction, commitment and efficiency, and the organisation as a whole. These are cornerstones of a creative, dynamic and modern EEAS, mirroring the values that it promotes.

This Strategy recommends the appointment of an Equal Opportunities Officer and the creation of a supporting Network, with a view to shaping and monitoring implementation. The Equal Opportunities Officer should be supported by a network of volunteering colleagues, including senior staff, to raise awareness, help monitor progress and to drive forward implementation ('Equality Ambassadors').

The Strategy focuses on three main priorities:

1. Gender equality,
2. An open and inclusive working environment,
3. Result-oriented, flexible working conditions incorporating work-life balance.

All three priorities have equal importance, but differ in terms of urgency. The focus should be in the areas with the most apparent gaps and challenges, and with the most obvious opportunities for progress.

A mutually open and transparent working relationship between staff and management will be key to the success of this Strategy.

2. Equality between women and men (gender equality) in the EEAS

Equal rights, obligations and opportunities, equal consideration and equal influence for women and men in the EEAS

Progress towards sustainable gender balance in the EEAS

Sustainable institutional culture shift in the EEAS

Equality between women and men is a foundational value of the EU. The Treaties, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, provide that the Union shall promote equality between women and men in all its activities and ensure it in all areas.

The overarching policy framework of gender in EU external action, the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020¹, commits the EEAS to shift its institutional culture – including to improve the participation of women in decision-making positions within the EU. The Staff Regulations *inter alia* call for measures and actions to promote equal opportunities for women and men, and envisage appropriate provisions to redress de facto inequalities that hamper opportunities for women.

This Strategy aims to achieve gender equality in the EEAS in a broad sense, whereby women and men enjoy equal rights, equal obligations and equal opportunities across the service. This Strategy aims to attain both quantifiable and qualitative aspects of gender equality, through accelerated progress towards gender balance and accelerated institutional culture shift in the EEAS. This Strategy pursues a sustainable outcome, whereby gender equality obtains in the EEAS as a workplace, and the organisation is renowned, within and outside the EU, for its professional, effective, inclusive and collaborative institutional culture and structure.

There is ample evidence from research conducted in various organisations that increasing gender equality, through properly reflecting gender balance in management positions, correlates with

¹ The Gender Action Plan provides a monitoring and accountability framework against which to measure progress on gender equality and girls' and women's rights and empowerment in developing, enlargement and neighbourhood countries, including in fragile, conflict and emergency situations. Furthermore, the Gender Action Plan establishes a set of indicators on institutional culture shift for all EU actors, and envisages systematic reporting in this regard. However, the indicators on institutional culture shift are mostly external action-orientated, and do not substitute to a stand-alone strategy and implementation framework on gender equality and equal opportunities in the EEAS.

increased effectiveness, productivity and innovation in the workplace. There are compelling arguments in the business world, that by tapping into the full human talent pool increases the availability of human potential, perspectives and experiences. This, in turn, increases the availability of generative and creative capacities and renders the workplace more satisfactory and attractive for present and future co-workers.

The overall numerical gender balance in the EEAS is currently close to equal. However, the qualitative gender composition of the service is increasingly imbalanced in ADs and equivalent (Contract Agent function group IV), middle-management and senior management positions. At the end of 2016, the EEAS had a total of 4,266 staff, split between 1,950 in HQ and 2,316 in EU Delegations. In the ADs and equivalent category, 68% of all officials are men and 32% are women, and the gender disparity among AD staff is more significant in EU Delegations than in HQ. Men are in the majority in all AD grades (AD7-AD16), the two entry-level ones. In middle-management positions, men represent 75% and women 25%. At the level of senior management, men account for 87%, while women account for 13% of the workforce. The overall gender balance in the AST and equivalent (Contract Agent function groups I, II, III) staff category is reversed: women represent 69% and men 31% of the workforce, with a relatively higher proportion of men in EU Delegations than in HQ. The overall higher representation of women in AST grades is particularly due to the fact that women hold 71% of the posts in the lower AST grades (AST1-8). A gender balance is reached in the AST9 grade, beyond which the situation is reversed and women represent only 23%, while men represent 77% of staff in the two highest grades (AST10-11). In the SC staff category, women hold 85% and men hold 15% of the positions.

Since the early phases of EEAS creation (2011), the overall gender composition of the organisation has largely stagnated, with women's share increasing only by a few percentage points over the years (e.g. women's share in the AD category rising from 30% in 2012 to 33% in 2016 and women's share in management climbing from 21% in 2013 to 23% in 2016). With the current trends, it could take 23 years to achieve gender balance in AD positions and 56 years to achieve gender balance in management in the EEAS.

The imbalance in the gender composition of the EEAS at management level is particularly pronounced when compared to the EU institutions where comparative data is available, notably the Commission, the Parliament and the Council. Better gender balance in management in these institutions is considered to correlate with the fact that all three have developed and implemented targeted strategies and action plans in the areas of gender equality, equal opportunities and

diversity. This EEAS Strategy builds on the experiences, lessons learned and good practices emanating from these frameworks. At the same time, it fully takes into account the specificities of the EEAS, notably its geographical layout and make-up and the multi-source turnover of its workforce (from EU MS as well as from EU institutions).

This Strategy aims to accelerate progress towards sustainable gender balance at all levels, in all functions and in all job categories in the EEAS, both in HQ and in EU Delegations. To this end, and in order to ensure consistency across EU institutions, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) targets will be set for the gender composition of the EEAS. Human Resources procedures for early talent spotting, talent management and development will be geared towards realising these targets. Progress against these targets will be measured and accounted for through a purpose-built monitoring, evaluation and reporting procedure. Appointments, including appointments to management positions, will continue to be based on competence and qualification, with the possibility of giving preference to the under-represented gender in case of equal merit, as envisaged by the Staff Regulations.

This Strategy aims to accelerate institutional culture shift in the EEAS. The end pursued is a sustainable institutional culture where the needs, concerns and preferences of women and men have equal influence on EEAS policies, procedures and decision making, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men in the organisation. To this end, measures will be put in place for the sustainable transformation of institutional reflexes and individual mind-sets. Transformational measures will aim to counteract stereotypes, unintended bias and prejudices while at the same time fostering inclusivity, diversity and collaboration through training, mentoring, coaching, networking and innovative learning and through providing equal development opportunities for women and men. Notwithstanding the legitimate career aspirations of both women and men to management positions, measures put in place pursuant to this Strategy will facilitate and promote diverse lateral career paths and help staff identify and pursue suitable career options.

All members of the service, women and men alike, should benefit from increased gender equality in the EEAS. It will be expected from everyone in the EEAS to contribute to attaining the ends pursued under this Strategy and to contributing effectively to its sustainable outcome. Staff in management positions will bear special responsibility and accountability. Accordingly, promoting the implementation of this Strategy will be considered a formal management responsibility, and the performance of managers will be evaluated in this regard.

3. Open, inclusive working environment, respectful of diversity

A diverse workforce, reflecting European society

An inclusive working culture, respectful of diversity

The EEAS can be proud of its cultural diversity, with staff emanating from over 30 countries. However, beyond nationality, the EEAS should strive to reflect the full spectrum of diversity in today's European society.

This Strategy confirms that the EEAS aims to be an inclusive workplace which values the contribution of all colleagues, regardless of physical ability, age, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or parenting/ caring obligations.

Endeavouring to increase workplace diversity is not an empty slogan — it is a smart business decision². Research shows that diverse teams deliver more than homogenous groups. For example, when confronted with diversity, “group think” is challenged and sharper analysis can emerge. Diverse teams are more likely to re-examine facts, process information carefully and remain objective. The attention foreseen by this Strategy to diversity and inclusion aims to increase productivity and innovation, as well as employee retention.

This strategy identifies a number of groups meriting attention, to ensure a diverse and inclusive workforce. Specific measures are proposed (*see Recommendations*) and, over the period of implementation, the Equal Opportunities Officer, under the direction of the Secretary General and in cooperation with the network of Equality Ambassadors, may decide on further measures aimed at one or two specific groups per year. This will ensure progressive increases in both diversity and inclusion.

(i) Diversity

Unlike the area of gender equality, basic statistics on the abovementioned groups are not available. Consideration could be given to surveys, which would clarify, for example, the number of colleagues

² Harvard Business Review, November 2016 <https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-diverse-teams-are-smarter>

identifying as belonging to special groups [e.g. disabled/ LGBTI/ caregivers etc.]. Such surveys would remain voluntary and subject to the highest standards of data protection.

It should be noted that disabled colleagues are covered by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This legally binding instrument foresees the right to a work environment which is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. Measures to improve the EEAS' institutional culture could include awareness-raising of disability issues and adjustment of the working environment at HQ/EU Delegations (both physical infrastructures and IT systems). Annual celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December) would be a positive step.

Age should not be an obstacle when considered for a particular post or promotion. Junior women and senior women and men report difficulties in this respect. Age should not withhold career progression. Measures in this area could include training to counter age-related bias. The result should be an adjustment of the institutional culture to recognise the value of experienced colleagues.

Ethnic origin is often overlooked in a multinational context, but it is clear that the EEAS workforce does not reflect the diversity of European societies today, including established minority communities. The EEAS intake is influenced by the output of national education systems. However, pushing for a broader pool of talent would result in a staff body which is more representative of the 21st century EU, not to mention access to specialist language and other skill sets.

Gender identity: LGBTI groups could be better represented within the EEAS, for example through the “Égalité” network active at the European Commission. Future measures could include exploring how better to support same-sex couples, notably in the case of joint postings to EU Delegations. The EEAS should also foresee annual celebration of the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT), on 17 May.

Religion: seen by some as the most sensitive category, additional statistics on this topic, gathered in an anonymous manner with attention to data protection, would be helpful for two reasons. First, to establish the representativeness of the current staff body. Second, to ensure legal protections against discrimination in this area.

Parenting / caring obligations: measures aimed at support for parents and caregivers are set out in detail under section 3. These groups should not suffer discrimination as a result of caring duties.

Across the areas mentioned above, staff should have confidence in the fairness of internal selection procedures.

As EEAS staff retires over time, a higher proportion of new colleagues will be drawn from EPSO reserve lists. EEAS will engage with EPSO to support merit-based but also gender-balanced recruitment, which should draw from the widest possible talent pools in Member States.

EEAS communication with citizens will project the diversity we plan to ensure (social media, website, EUDEL activities), in order to attract the best talented candidates to our ranks.

(ii) Inclusion

Inclusion goes beyond diversity. It implies that staff feel valued, respected as individuals and at ease in their diversity at the workplace.

Training, mentoring, coaching and networking can help to counteract stereotypes and unintended bias. Measures will be put in place for the transformation of institutional culture in this regard.

Actions taken to promote diversity and inclusion at the EEAS will increase coherence with EU external action in the field of promotion of rights and non-discrimination.

Actions taken in the priority area of 'an open, inclusive working environment, respectful of diversity' will be monitored, evaluated and reported upon, on the one hand through voluntary, anonymous surveys and statistics generated on key figures, such as: (i) the percentage of current staff identifying as disabled, ethnic minority, LGBTI; (ii) the percentage of these groups successful in application for EU Delegation posts; and (iii) the evolution of diversity within entry level intakes (EPSO). On the other hand, monitoring, evaluation and reporting will follow up on the implementation of specific recommendations in relation to training on: (i) diversity/ inclusion; (ii) adjustment of physical environment for disabled colleagues and visitors; (iii) EEAS celebration of IDAHOT day, etc. (see Recommendations for details).

4. Work-life balance through result-oriented and flexible working conditions

EEAS arrangements to allow for improved access to work-life balance arrangements in the EEAS

Facilitated access for male EEAS staff to family-related leaves of absence and flexible working arrangements for men

Mind-set shift throughout the EEAS towards a result-oriented and trust-based approach

This Strategy aims to take into account the objectives of the most recent Commission proposal for a Directive on Work-Life Balance as well as existing Commission-level tools on equal opportunities for women and men³. In line with the proposed Work-Life Balance Draft Directive, the EEAS will specifically address the objective of: (1) Right to request Flexible Working Arrangements, (2) Parental Leave, (3) Paternity Leave, and (4) Caregivers' Leave. Particular attention should be focused on specifically creating a work environment conducive to attracting staff with families to apply for posts in the EU Delegations.

Bearing in mind the unique character of the EEAS, it is important to equip EU Delegations with suitable tools to develop family-friendly conditions. First, solutions and procedures in EU Delegations supporting working opportunities for spouses will need to be further examined and implemented. Importance will be directed towards: (i) negotiating with national and local authorities, international organizations, and NGOs in order to identify ways of allowing work permits for diplomatic spouses, (ii) striving to retain diplomatic status along with exploring secondment possibilities for spouses of EEAS/COM officials to Member States' diplomatic missions, and (iii) facilitating options with the host country's authorities to accept voluntary unpaid work for spouses. Moreover, priority will be given to helping future EU Delegation colleagues to identify and map appropriate school opportunities.

Across the EU, caring responsibilities are the reasons for inactivity for almost 20% of inactive women, while this is only the case for less than 2% of men. On this ground, taking action is not only a question of fairness, but it is also an economic imperative: it is estimated that the economic loss due to the gender employment gap amounts to around €370 billion per year in the EU.

³ Such as the Commission Decision of 2014 on working time and the Commission Decision of 2015 on telework

The measures proposed in this Strategy aim at helping working parents and caregivers by not obliging them to make a choice between their families and their professional careers. The goal is to facilitate flexible working conditions to give staff advancement opportunities in their professional careers, while reconciling it with a personal/family life and lowering the stress level. The Strategy recommends to reinforce flexible and blended working arrangements, to improve teleworking options, and to provide opportunities for parental leave and part-time working. Reintegration measures after maternity, paternity and parental leaves are other crucial measures.

Tailor-made solutions with the motto of "what works best" for staff and line managers are paramount. The actions and measures negotiated and agreed upon between staff and line managers will necessitate a change of mind-sets towards a result-oriented and trust-based approach, where performance will be measured based on results rather than presence.

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Personal Data Protection and Privacy notice: Any action related to the present Strategy and to the work of the Equal Opportunities Officer and Network, including surveys, consultations and advice, will process personal data with due care and in compliance with data protection principles contained in the European Convention on Human Rights, the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the pertinent European Union legislation, the General Data Protection Regulation, Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 with regard to the processing of personal data by Union institutions and bodies, as well as its successive legislative act.