

Gender Equality Plan 2025–2029 Cluj Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association (CMA IDA)

1. Introduction

The Cluj Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association (CMA IDA) recognizes gender equality as a cornerstone for institutional progress, employee satisfaction, and inclusive regional development. This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for the period 2025–2029 is crafted as a transformative framework aimed at embedding gender awareness, fairness, and inclusiveness across every level of the organization. While this plan aligns with legal and policy requirements, its deeper purpose is to cultivate a workplace that is nurturing, equitable, and empowering for all staff—especially the women who form the majority of CMA IDA's workforce.

Rather than a static compliance document, this GEP is a dynamic, living commitment. It reflects the shared vision of a professional environment where employees are supported in their career development, respected in their identities, and given the necessary resources to thrive personally and professionally. By embedding gender-sensitive practices across recruitment, leadership, care policies, and daily interactions, CMA IDA affirms its values of integrity, collaboration, and shared responsibility.

The Plan draws on leading frameworks such as the European Institute for Gender Equality's (EIGE) GEAR tool, the Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility criteria, and recommendations from Romania's national strategy for gender equality. It also integrates insights from international best practices, including lessons learned from peer organizations and the Gender Equality Index 2024, which emphasizes the importance of well-being and resilience in gender-equal institutions.

2. Legal and Policy Context

This Gender Equality Plan is firmly grounded in an evolving and multi-tiered legal and policy architecture designed to promote gender equality, eliminate workplace discrimination, and ensure fair treatment for all. The intersection of national, European, and international legal instruments provides a strong normative and operational framework for CMA IDA's gender equality commitments.

- **National Framework:** Romania has developed a structured legal environment for gender equality. Law no. 202/2002 serves as the cornerstone for promoting equal opportunities and treatment between women and men, mandating both public and private sector institutions to engage in active measures to reduce gender-based disparities. This law is complemented by Law no. 53/2003, the Labour Code, which institutionalizes protections such as non-discriminatory recruitment, equal pay for equal work, and rights related to maternity, paternity, and parental leave.

The National Strategy on Promoting Equal Opportunities and Treatment for Women and Men and Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence (2022–2027) provides policy direction, linking institutional practice to broader national development goals. The strategy promotes structural change through gender mainstreaming, institutional accountability, intersectional approaches, and gender-sensitive public service delivery.

- **European Legal Obligations:** The European Union offers a comprehensive legislative framework that reinforces national obligations. Directive 2006/54/EC outlines the principle of equal treatment in employment, explicitly covering access to work, vocational training, working conditions, and occupational social security. Directive (EU) 2019/1158 on work-life balance extends these protections, focusing on improving family-related leave provisions, encouraging shared care responsibilities, and strengthening the right to request flexible working arrangements.

Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU ensures legal backing for equality between women and men. Meanwhile, Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) calls for gender equality to be mainstreamed into all EU policies, and Article 157 supports equal pay and the enforcement of anti-discrimination principles.

- **Strategic Policy Tools and Guidelines:** In addition to legally binding texts, CMA IDA relies on strategic policy guidance to support effective implementation:
 - The **European Pillar of Social Rights**, particularly Principle 2, defines gender equality as foundational to justice and inclusion in the labor market.
 - The **GEAR Tool (Gender Equality in Academia and Research)** developed by EIGE provides a step-by-step methodology to create, implement, monitor, and sustain institutional gender equality plans.
 - The **Council of Europe Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life** emphasizes the duty of local and regional authorities to embed gender equality into service delivery, public consultation, budgeting, and local governance.
 - The **Gender Equality Index** by EIGE offers both diagnostic and evaluative benchmarks that institutions can use to assess progress and refine interventions.
 - The **EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025** lays out an ambitious plan to promote equality across all member states through legislative initiatives, awareness campaigns, and funding programs.

Together, these instruments define not just a compliance obligation but a blueprint for proactive engagement. For CMA IDA, aligning with this comprehensive legal and policy context signifies its ambition to be a leader in gender equality at the metropolitan level, translating formal standards into everyday workplace practices and public value. that guides CMA IDA in advancing gender equality not only as a legal obligation but as a central element of good governance and public sector innovation.

3. Organizational Framework and Governance

CMA IDA functions as a public intercommunity development institution that embraces collaboration, innovation, and inclusive governance. Its organizational structure includes a General Director, strategic and operational departments, and project-based implementation units. Within this framework, gender equality and non-discrimination are positioned not merely as guiding principles but as strategic imperatives that shape internal culture, institutional operations, and public-facing programs.

To ensure the effective implementation and sustainability of this Gender Equality Plan (GEP), CMA IDA will invest in a structured, accountable, and participatory governance architecture, informed by good practices outlined by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and aligned with the Council of Europe Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life.

- **Gender Equality Officer (GEO):** This appointed staff member will coordinate the planning, roll-out, and monitoring of GEP actions. The GEO will support internal policy development, design training modules, and oversee gender mainstreaming in institutional practices. Acting as both an advisor and focal point, the GEO will ensure that gender equality principles are applied across all levels of decision-making and provide periodic progress reports to senior management and the governing board.
- **Gender and Inclusion Committee:** Composed of representatives from all departments, this committee is a central platform for participatory governance and intersectional awareness. It will meet quarterly to review implementation updates, identify emerging needs, and ensure that GEP activities are embedded across internal and external processes. The Committee will also work in collaboration with external stakeholders, including gender experts, to ensure relevance and rigor.

- **Metropolitan Center for Gender Equality:** Embedded within CMA IDA, this Center serves as a specialized structure dedicated to advancing equality and dignity in the workplace. It functions as a resource hub for training, consultation, and awareness-building while also hosting the internal mechanism for confidential complaints and the institutional whistleblower channel. It plays a dual role: responding to incidents (such as harassment or discrimination) and proactively building a culture of respect and well-being.
- **Role of the General Director and Senior Management:** The General Director and departmental heads will champion and oversee the successful implementation of the GEP. Their responsibilities include embedding gender equality objectives into institutional strategies, approving budget lines for equality initiatives, and fostering an enabling environment for staff. The General Director will also ensure compliance with Horizon Europe's GEP eligibility criteria, facilitate interdepartmental collaboration, and act as the institutional representative in external gender equality forums.
- **Institutional Integration and Sustainability:** The GEP will be incorporated into CMA IDA's strategic plans, human resource policies, budgeting frameworks, and performance assessments. Equality indicators will be integrated into annual departmental evaluations. Institutional tools such as gender budgeting and gender impact assessments will be progressively introduced to measure, reflect, and improve inclusivity across all activities and expenditures.

This governance model reinforces CMA IDA's commitment to embedding gender equality into its organizational DNA. By mobilizing leadership, decentralizing responsibility, and creating mechanisms for feedback and learning, CMA IDA ensures that gender equality is not only promoted but practiced in tangible, measurable ways that benefit all staff and stakeholders.

4. Needs Assessment

As of 2025, CMA IDA's workforce comprises 28 employees: 20 women and 8 men. Among them, 6 women and 4 men occupy leadership or managerial roles, while two women are on child-raising leave. This snapshot of institutional composition offers valuable insight into the existing gender dynamics and the necessity for sustained and informed interventions.

These figures point to several important dimensions:

- A significant female-majority workforce, underscoring the importance of policies that prioritize women's professional development, psychological safety, and work-life reconciliation.
- **A gender gap in leadership, with men still overrepresented relative to their share of the workforce, indicating structural barriers in promotion pathways. Although men make up only 29% of CMA IDA's workforce, they occupy 40% of leadership roles. Conversely, women—despite constituting over 71% of the staff—hold just 60% of leadership positions. This disproportion means that men are nearly twice as likely to hold a leadership role as women within the organization, a discrepancy that calls into question the neutrality of career advancement processes.**
- A demonstrated need for flexible policies and reintegration support for parents, particularly women returning from leave, in line with best practices identified by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020) and European Commission (2022).

According to EIGE's Gender Equality Index 2024, women remain underrepresented in decision-making roles across Europe, with persistent gaps in managerial and board-level positions. The 2024 Index also emphasizes well-being and mental health as core challenges in gender-equal work environments, particularly post-COVID-19, when caregiving pressures have disproportionately fallen on women (EIGE, 2024).

This structural disparity in leadership positions is not merely a statistical imbalance—it reflects institutional inertia and gendered expectations that restrict women's access to power. While CMA IDA

affirms gender equality in its principles, the leadership composition reveals that equity has not yet been operationalized in practice. Internal data from the 2023 qualitative survey support this analysis: many female respondents expressed a desire for formal mentorship, greater leadership visibility, and structured advancement opportunities. These findings suggest that the leadership gap is not due to a lack of interest or capacity among women, but rather to organizational cultures and practices that inadvertently advantage male career trajectories.

Furthermore, scientific literature underscores that gender-sensitive work environments—characterized by inclusive leadership, fair appraisal mechanisms, and supportive parental policies—positively affect employee retention, engagement, and institutional resilience (OECD, 2021; World Bank, 2020). The European Commission's Horizon Europe guidance also reiterates the critical need to institutionalize gender equality through gender-disaggregated data collection, mandatory training, and embedded organizational reforms.

To support the evidence-based development of this GEP, CMA IDA conducted an internal qualitative survey in 2023. Responses revealed:

- Broad support for flexibility, including remote work and individualized scheduling
- A desire for formal mentorship and leadership development pathways for women
- Demand for increased psychological safety and anti-harassment protections
- The need for stronger visibility of gender equality in organizational culture

These insights affirm findings from the EU's "Roadmap to Effective Implementation of Gender Equality Plans" (2022), which stresses that institutional transformation must be supported by bottom-up consultation, top-down leadership, and a systemic policy framework.

To genuinely close the leadership gap, CMA IDA must treat the underrepresentation of women in decision-making as a strategic and ethical deficit. Dedicated programs to identify, sponsor, and elevate female talent must become core institutional priorities—not optional add-ons. Without such targeted corrective action, the current disproportionality will perpetuate a culture of unequal opportunity and unfulfilled institutional potential.

By triangulating internal data with European and international indicators, CMA IDA recognizes that advancing gender equality is not only a matter of justice and compliance, but also of strategic institutional development. This Plan is therefore both a response to existing structural imbalances and a forward-looking commitment to inclusive and resilient governance.

5. Strategic Objectives and Thematic Areas

The Strategic Objectives and Thematic Areas of CMA IDA's Gender Equality Plan are informed by leading international practices, research from institutions such as the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), the European Commission's Horizon Europe program, OECD best practices, and empirical literature from global human resources and gender policy fields. These objectives are intended to address systemic barriers, promote institutional transformation, and ensure a work environment where gender equality is embedded structurally and culturally.

The overarching strategic objectives are as follows:

- **Objective 1:** Strengthen institutional frameworks to support and sustain gender equality.
- **Objective 2:** Promote equal representation and participation of women in decision-making and leadership.
- **Objective 3:** Create a flexible and supportive work environment that enables work-life balance.
- **Objective 4:** Institutionalize gender mainstreaming across all operations and projects.
- **Objective 5:** Ensure accountability, monitoring, and sustainability of gender equality actions.

These objectives correspond with the Horizon Europe's minimum GEP requirements, including dedicated resources, gender-disaggregated data collection, training, and policy integration.

International research has demonstrated that gender-balanced institutions are more resilient, transparent, and socially responsible (World Economic Forum, 2022). Studies by the ILO and World Bank confirm that women's leadership improves team innovation and ethical governance. According to the McKinsey Global Institute (2018), closing gender gaps in labor participation and leadership could add trillions to global GDP.

The following thematic areas give operational dimension to the strategic objectives, allowing CMA IDA to translate them into actionable and measurable interventions:

5.1 Gender-Responsive Recruitment and Career Progression

CMA IDA is committed to ensuring fair, transparent, and inclusive hiring and advancement processes. Job descriptions and recruitment communications will use inclusive, gender-sensitive language, and selection panels will be gender-balanced wherever possible. To support women's career development, tailored mentoring programs, career coaching, and professional development workshops will be introduced.

Annual career mapping sessions will be offered to all staff, enabling employees to discuss goals and identify tailored development opportunities. These efforts will be supported by the HR department in collaboration with the Gender Equality Officer.

5.2 Work-Life Balance and Flexibility

A flexible and empathetic approach to work is essential for supporting employees' holistic well-being. CMA IDA will enhance current policies around flexible work arrangements, including telecommuting, adjustable hours, and phased return-to-work options for staff returning from caregiving leave.

Evidence from the European Commission and the OECD confirms that flexible work arrangements, such as remote working, part-time options, and flexible scheduling, contribute significantly to employee satisfaction, especially for women who disproportionately bear caregiving responsibilities. The European Commission's 2022 report on "Work-Life Balance in the EU" highlights that institutions offering flexible work options see higher retention rates and improved gender equity outcomes. Likewise, OECD research has shown that supportive workplace cultures reduce absenteeism and boost productivity when they respect diverse needs for work-life integration.

In addition, the organization will expand support for parents by providing clear parental leave procedures, reintegration guidance, and caregiver accommodations. These will be complemented by awareness campaigns that destigmatize flexible work and promote a balanced, family-friendly workplace culture. A flexible and empathetic approach to work is essential for supporting employees' holistic well-being. CMA IDA will enhance current policies around flexible work arrangements, including telecommuting, adjustable hours, and phased return-to-work options for staff returning from caregiving leave.

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5.3 Leadership Development and Gender Parity

With women forming the majority of CMA IDA's workforce, but men still disproportionately occupying leadership roles, proactive leadership development for women is a key strategic goal. Dedicated training programs will build managerial and strategic skills among female staff.

Internal talent identification will be used to create an inclusive leadership pipeline. Role shadowing, participation in high-level meetings, and coaching by senior managers will be encouraged to strengthen visibility and confidence among emerging female leaders.

5.4 Employee Well-being and Health Support

Well-being is central to organizational productivity, inclusion, and morale. CMA IDA will adopt a multi-dimensional well-being strategy informed by the World Health Organization's guidelines on workplace health promotion and Romania's national public health recommendations. According to WHO (2020), comprehensive mental health programs in the workplace—including access to support services, stigma reduction initiatives, and structural supports—lead to lower absenteeism and improved job satisfaction. Aligned with these standards, CMA IDA will introduce:

- Free and confidential mental health counseling services for all staff
- Ergonomic assessments for workstations and guidance on occupational safety
- On-site quiet or rest spaces to promote mental restoration
- Annual “Wellness Month” with health screenings, mindfulness sessions, and nutrition education
- Gender-responsive health policies, including accommodations for menstrual health and menopause support

These initiatives reflect growing consensus across public health bodies and gender equality institutions that workplace well-being must include gender-specific needs, emotional support mechanisms, and proactive prevention strategies. CMA IDA will embed well-being KPIs into its HR strategy and periodically survey staff to adjust offerings in response to emerging needs. Well-being is central to organizational productivity and morale. CMA IDA will adopt a multi-dimensional well-being strategy that includes:

- Free access to confidential mental health counseling
- On-site quiet or rest spaces
- Ergonomic assessments for all workstations
- Gender-responsive health policies, including menstrual and menopause support

A dedicated “Wellness Month” each year will promote activities such as mindfulness sessions, well-being webinars, and health screenings.

5.5 Inclusive Organizational Culture and Communication

Creating a respectful and inclusive culture requires consistent communication and shared values. CMA IDA will integrate gender equality messages into its visual identity, internal communications, and onboarding processes.

Training on unconscious bias, inclusive communication, and gender-sensitive service delivery will be made mandatory for all staff. Regular workshops and awareness events will facilitate open conversations about equality and respect in the workplace.

5.6 Prevention of Harassment and Support for Affected Staff

CMA IDA will maintain a zero-tolerance stance on workplace harassment, with clear procedures for confidential reporting and investigation. The Metropolitan Center for Gender Equality will manage reporting mechanisms and offer support to affected staff.

Preventive strategies will include:

- Regular briefings on workplace behavior standards
- Anonymous reporting channels
- Mediation and conflict resolution services where appropriate

5.7 Gender Mainstreaming in Policies and External Programs

Gender equality will not be confined to HR policies—it will inform all operational and strategic activities of CMA IDA. Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) will be embedded in project planning, and service delivery will be reviewed for inclusiveness and accessibility.

CMA IDA will apply EIGE's recommended methodologies for conducting GIAs, including:

- **Screening** for potential gender relevance in new or existing policies.
- **Gender analysis** using both quantitative (sex-disaggregated data) and qualitative data (focus groups, surveys).
- **Adjusting** interventions to ensure that gender-specific needs and potential impacts are addressed.

To facilitate this:

- Staff involved in project development and policy design will receive targeted training using the EIGE GIA Toolkit.
- Project documentation will include a mandatory GIA summary, including recommendations and mitigation actions where applicable.
- External projects funded by EU or national programs will be required to submit GIA assessments as part of compliance and accountability procedures.

All public-facing communications and initiatives will be audited to ensure they serve and reflect diverse needs. Where necessary, CMA IDA will collaborate with community organizations and gender experts to refine approaches. Gender equality will not be confined to HR policies—it will inform all operational and strategic activities of CMA IDA. Gender Impact Assessments will be embedded in project planning, and service delivery will be reviewed for inclusiveness and accessibility.

All public-facing communications and initiatives will be audited to ensure they serve and reflect diverse needs. Where necessary, CMA IDA will collaborate with community organizations and gender experts to refine approaches.

5.8 Embracing Intersectionality and Diversity

Gender equality must be pursued in tandem with broader diversity and inclusion goals. CMA IDA will implement practices that recognize and support employees facing intersecting forms of disadvantage related to ethnicity, disability, age, or family status.

To this end, employee data collection will be enhanced (with appropriate safeguards) to ensure evidence-based decision-making. Diverse voices will be actively included in committees and consultation processes.

5.9 Special Provisions for Pregnant Employees and Women Returning from Maternity Leave

In line with Romanian national legislation—specifically Law no. 53/2003 (Labour Code), Law no. 202/2002 on equal opportunities and treatment between women and men, and Government Emergency Ordinance no. 111/2010 on parental leave and child-raising benefits—CMA IDA undertakes to provide a comprehensive framework of rights, protections, and supportive measures for pregnant employees and women returning from maternity leave.

These measures ensure full compliance with national and European norms while advancing CMA IDA's institutional commitment to a gender-responsive, family-friendly workplace.

Legal Protections and Non-Discrimination

- Article 60 of Law no. 53/2003 prohibits the dismissal of employees during pregnancy, maternity leave, and child-raising leave. Exceptions are strictly limited to organizational restructuring that affects the entire workplace.
- Article 5 of Law no. 202/2002 reinforces the principle of non-discrimination, mandating that employers must ensure equal treatment for men and women in all aspects of employment, including during pregnancy and after return from maternity or parental leave.
- CMA IDA guarantees that pregnant employees and those returning from maternity or parental leave will not face direct or indirect discrimination in decisions related to promotion, performance evaluation, training, or benefits.

Maternity Leave and Return-to-Work Guarantees

- Under Article 2 and 50 of the Labour Code, employees are entitled to 126 calendar days of paid maternity leave (63 days before and 63 days after childbirth), fully compensated through the national health insurance fund.

- Upon return, CMA IDA ensures that women will resume the same job or an equivalent position (Article 53 and 64 of the Labour Code) with no loss of salary, grade, or accumulated rights.
- CMA IDA will implement a structured Return-to-Work Program, which includes:
 - A reintegration interview and personalized support plan.
 - The option to work reduced hours or from home for a transition period of up to 3 months.
 - Access to career coaching and mentorship to support re-engagement and professional development.

Health and Safety Measures

- Article 122 of Law no. 53/2003 obliges the employer to adjust working conditions for pregnant women where health or safety risks are identified. If adjustments are not feasible, employees will be reassigned or placed on special leave with pay.
- CMA IDA will guarantee:
 - Adjusted work schedules and rest breaks as needed.
 - Modified tasks or reassignment in cases of medical recommendation.
 - Paid absence for mandatory prenatal medical appointments, as supported by Article 152 of the Labour Code.

Breastfeeding and Nursing Rights

- Article 97 of Law no. 53/2003 provides for two breastfeeding breaks of one hour each per day, or a two-hour reduction in daily working time, without affecting wages, until the child reaches the age of 12 months.
- CMA IDA will ensure access to a private, hygienic, and comfortable space for breastfeeding or expressing milk, in line with EU and WHO recommendations.

Parental Leave and Extended Rights

- Government Emergency Ordinance no. 111/2010 entitles either parent to take up to 24 months of child-raising leave, with an optional third year for children with disabilities.
- CMA IDA will:
 - Respect and support requests for unpaid parental leave extensions.
 - Offer reintegration pathways following extended absences.
 - Maintain regular communication and professional development options for staff on leave to ease eventual reentry.

Anti-Stigma and Cultural Awareness Measures

- CMA IDA recognizes the importance of fostering a culture in which pregnancy and maternity are respected, valued, and fully supported.

To this end:

- Awareness and anti-stigma campaigns will be conducted to promote positive attitudes toward pregnancy-related leave.
- Staff evaluations and advancement considerations will exclude periods of maternity or parental leave.
- Pregnant women or new mothers will not be excluded from training, leadership development, or project opportunities, ensuring continuity and inclusion.

Implementation

These provisions will be integrated into CMA IDA's internal regulations, HR manuals, and onboarding processes. The Gender Equality Officer and HR Department will jointly ensure that all staff—especially managers—are trained on these obligations and that affected employees receive tailored support.

This policy recognizes that supporting maternity is not only a legal obligation but a strategic investment in workforce continuity, talent retention, and institutional well-being.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Sustainability

The successful implementation of CMA IDA's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) depends on systematic monitoring, participatory evaluation, and a long-term vision of sustainability. These processes ensure that gender equality efforts are not symbolic or static but responsive, accountable, and embedded across all institutional domains.

To this end, the Gender Equality Officer (GEO) will lead a robust monitoring framework based on quantitative and qualitative indicators, harmonized with EIGE's Gender Equality Index and aligned with Horizon Europe requirements. The GEO will also be responsible for submitting annual progress reports to the General Director and the Gender and Inclusion Committee. These reports will include disaggregated data analyses, summaries of completed actions, and reflections on lessons learned.

Institutional dashboards will track performance indicators, including but not limited to:

- **Gender distribution in recruitment and promotions**
- **Uptake of flexible work arrangements and parental leave**
- **Participation rates in training, leadership development, and well-being initiatives**
- **Perceptions of safety and inclusion as measured by anonymous staff surveys**
- **Number and resolution timelines of complaints related to discrimination or harassment**

CMA IDA will also implement a cycle of learning and refinement:

- **Biannual staff pulse surveys** will collect feedback on GEP actions, policy clarity, and workplace culture.
- **Annual internal reviews** led by the Gender and Inclusion Committee will review targets, validate achievements, and update operational plans.
- **A midterm external review in 2027** will assess the Plan's effectiveness in promoting gender mainstreaming, equity in leadership, and staff satisfaction.
- **A final external evaluation in 2029**, conducted by an independent expert, will provide strategic recommendations and baseline input for the 2030–2034 GEP cycle.

To institutionalize sustainability, GEP actions and outcomes will be linked to strategic planning, HR development, and budget allocation processes. This alignment will ensure that gender equality becomes part of CMA IDA's performance management systems, internal reporting structures, and external accountability commitments.

Moreover, the results of GEP evaluations will be disseminated through newsletters, intranet dashboards, and stakeholder meetings, ensuring visibility, institutional memory, and transparency. CMA IDA's monitoring model will also serve as a template for peer municipalities and regional development bodies, extending the Plan's impact beyond the institution.

7. Implementation Calendar

The successful implementation of CMA IDA's Gender Equality Plan requires a coordinated and phased approach, assigning clear responsibilities, establishing realistic timelines, and integrating evaluation checkpoints. The calendar below aligns strategic actions with CMA IDA's organizational capacities and builds in opportunities for reflection, adaptation, and alignment with EU and national gender equality objectives.

Each year is marked by a mix of foundational measures, continuous development, and institutional learning. Specific actions have been scheduled to meet Horizon Europe's GEP requirements and to deepen organizational transformation in the spirit of the EU Gender Equality Strategy and Romania's national equality policies. The calendar also promotes internal coherence between planning, budgeting, and performance cycles.

Below is the high-level calendar:

Year	Action	Responsible	Notes
2025	Appoint Gender Equality Officer and form Gender & Inclusion Committee	General Director+Social Department Manager	Kick-off meeting and internal launch event
2025	Develop internal training modules on gender equality and respectful workplace behavior	GEO + HR	Mandatory for all staff
2025	Launch gender awareness campaign and visual materials	GEO+ Social Department Manager	To promote visibility of GEP values
2026	Initiate mentoring and leadership program for women	GEO + External Partners	Training and networking included
2026	Conduct workplace climate and inclusion survey	External Consultant	Results used to refine GEP actions
2026	Launch annual Gender Pay Gap audit	Finance Department	Public summary with planned responses
2027	Midterm evaluation of GEP implementation	Gender and Inclusion Committee	Adjust targets and strategies if needed
2028	Gender mainstreaming workshop for technical departments	GEO + Department Managers	Applied learning for project design
2029	Final external evaluation of the GEP	Independent Evaluator	Supports design of 2030–2034 Plan

8. Conclusion

The Gender Equality Plan 2025–2029 of the Cluj Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association (CMA IDA) constitutes a transformative and multidimensional framework for embedding gender justice, employee well-being, and inclusive governance into the institutional core. In a time marked by shifting societal norms, policy innovation, and increasing pressure for equitable representation, this Plan embodies both the ethical imperative and strategic value of gender equality. As demonstrated across the previous chapters, the Plan is legally rooted in Romania’s national legislation—most notably Law no. 202/2002 and the Labour Code (Law no. 53/2003)—and aligned with European directives such as Directive 2006/54/EC and Directive 2019/1158 on work-life balance. The integration of EIGE’s Gender Equality Index and GEAR toolkit provides an evaluative and methodological backbone, ensuring that the Plan moves beyond rhetorical commitments to structural change. Moreover, this GEP reflects the spirit and objectives of the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, serving as a localized expression of a broader European mission for justice and inclusion.

Beyond legal compliance, however, this Plan centers the human experience. With 20 of 28 staff being women, CMA IDA is uniquely positioned to demonstrate how public institutions can empower their employees through a workplace culture of respect, psychological safety, and opportunity. Special attention is given to leadership development for women, gender-responsive well-being programs, flexible work models, and intersectionality. Such measures are not auxiliary but central to public value creation, as they align human potential with organizational resilience.

Scientific literature provides robust support for the strategies included herein. The OECD, ILO, and World Bank have repeatedly documented that institutions with gender-balanced leadership are more transparent, effective, and trusted. According to McKinsey’s (2018) global study, narrowing the gender

gap could contribute up to \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025. These insights are further echoed in EIGE's annual Gender Equality Index, which emphasizes that equitable workplaces are more sustainable and more adaptive to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, EIGE's 2024 Index shows clear correlations between high scores in gender equality and stronger performance in innovation, governance, and well-being.

From a governance standpoint, the Plan sets a new standard for public administration by integrating gender equality across leadership, operations, and performance measurement. The creation of the Gender Equality Officer role, the active engagement of the Gender and Inclusion Committee, and the institutionalization of gender impact assessments and gender budgeting represent structural innovations. These not only foster internal accountability but position CMA IDA as a regional leader and role model for peer institutions.

On an operational level, the implementation calendar provides a coherent and actionable pathway. It ensures that each year of the Plan builds upon the previous, layering foundational steps with iterative learning and evaluation. The midterm and final evaluations offer both external validation and institutional learning, reinforcing a culture of reflection and adaptation. Such monitoring aligns with EU expectations under Horizon Europe, reinforcing CMA IDA's eligibility and credibility in accessing European funding.

Crucially, this Plan recognizes that promoting gender equality is a form of institutional care. By prioritizing the physical, emotional, and professional well-being of its staff—particularly women who are underrepresented in leadership and overrepresented in caregiving roles—CMA IDA affirms that equity is inseparable from dignity. This people-centered approach not only enhances retention and morale but helps cultivate an environment in which all employees feel respected, supported, and inspired to lead.

In sum, the Gender Equality Plan 2025–2029 represents a comprehensive, rights-informed, and context-sensitive blueprint for inclusive institutional development. It translates international frameworks and national mandates into localized, actionable strategies that center employee well-being, foster institutional excellence, and promote gender justice. Through this Plan, CMA IDA not only meets its obligations but reaffirms its identity as an ethical, transparent, and innovative public institution.

The future envisioned by this Plan is one in which gender equality is not merely protected but promoted, not merely discussed but enacted—every day, by everyone, at every level of CMA IDA.

GENERAL DIRECTOR
ZOLTAN CORAIAN