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# Gender Equality Plan for the Natura 2000 Coalition Romania Federation

## Organizational context and intended scope

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is designed as a publication-ready, formal institutional document for Federația Coaliția Natura 2000 România[1] (the Coalition). The Coalition is described publicly as having been established in 2004 as an informal union and formalised in 2013 as a federation, with a mission to act as a technical think tank and a link between civil society and state institutions, and with an explicit vision of an inclusive, efficient and just future for protected and conserved areas. [2]

The Coalition’s publicly stated work profile—protected and conserved areas governance, biodiversity monitoring, large carnivore management, forestry and grassland management, ecological restoration, advocacy, environmental crime and environmental justice monitoring, community outreach, sustainable development, capacity building and education—creates multiple “gender touchpoints.” These touchpoints include internal organisational life (staffing, decision-making, culture) and external practice (how the Coalition designs research/monitoring, facilitates participation, and represents communities). [2]

This GEP covers: - The Coalition’s federation-level governance bodies and processes (e.g., General Assembly, Board/Consiliul Director, thematic working groups), as publicly described in Coalition documentation and governance-relevant materials. [3] - All federation-level workers and contributors: employees (full-time/part-time), interns/trainees, long-term volunteers, and individual consultants where the Coalition controls working conditions on Coalition assignments (including fieldwork, events, and advocacy work). [3] - Coalition-led events, convenings, and outputs (e.g., trainings, workshops, publications, policy positions) including participation expectations and safeguarding for attendees.

Because the Coalition is a federation of legally distinct member NGOs (18 active NGO members plus 10+ partners, as stated on the Coalition website), this GEP cannot replace each member organisation’s HR policies. Instead, it sets federation-level minimum



standards for Coalition activities and establishes a practical “Coalition-wide alignment package” (templates, training, and shared safeguards) that member NGOs can voluntarily adopt or adapt. [2]

## Strategic and legal framework

### EU-level best-practice baseline for GEPs

The Coalition’s requested “building blocks” (publication, resources, data monitoring, training) and the five thematic areas match the widely used GEP framework developed for the EU research and innovation context. EU guidance describes a GEP as a set of commitments and actions to promote gender equality through institutional and cultural change, and sets out four mandatory process requirements: (1) a public document published on the institution’s website and signed by top management, (2) dedicated resources and expertise, (3) sex/gender-disaggregated data collection and monitoring with regular reporting based on indicators, and (4) training and awareness raising (often including unconscious bias). [4]

The same EU guidance recommends that GEPs address five content areas using concrete measures and targets: 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 and teaching content; and measures against gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual harassment. [4]

More recent EU implementation guidance (for ex-post checks) clarifies that “signature and/or adoption by top management” is acceptable evidence of top-level commitment; it also notes that reporting can be at least every two years (though annual reporting remains valid), and encourages keeping current and previous GEP versions publicly accessible and easily findable. [5]

### National context in Romania[6]

This GEP is designed to be compatible with Romanian equality and non-discrimination frameworks that apply across public and private sectors, including employment and organisational life: - Law no. 202/2002 establishes measures for promoting equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and for eliminating sex-based discrimination, and explicitly applies across multiple fields including work and participation in decision-making. [7] - Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 establishes the general anti-discrimination framework, applying to public and private actors across employment and other social domains. [8] - Government Decision no. 970/2023 approves a national methodology on preventing and combating sex-based harassment as well as



moral harassment at work. The official legislative portal publication provides a central reference point for institutional-level procedures and expectations. [9]

National institutional actors relevant for implementation and external interface include National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men[10] and National Council for Combating Discrimination[11]. [12]

## Why “gender” is operationally relevant to the Coalition’s mission

The Coalition’s mission emphasises inclusive and just futures for protected and conserved areas and a community-involving approach to governance and environmental justice. [2] This alignment matters because gender affects who participates, who benefits, who bears costs (e.g., restrictions, conflict impacts), and whose knowledge is captured in “technical” processes.

The Coalition also works in areas that can trigger external pressure, harassment, or retaliation (e.g., environmental crime monitoring, watchdog and advocacy roles, and SLAPP-related work). [2] Evidence from human rights and conservation policy communities highlights that women human rights defenders may face gender-specific threats and violence, including online harassment and sexualised abuse. [13]

At EU level, protective legal instruments relevant to “watchdog” civic space and personal safety include: - the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive on protecting persons who engage in public participation (Directive (EU) 2024/1069), adopted in April 2024 and reported by the Commission as in force from May 2024; [14] - the EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence (Directive (EU) 2024/1385), creating an EU-wide basis for minimum protections; [15] - and the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention framework, with Romania’s ratification communicated publicly by Council of Europe[16]. [17]

The Coalition’s public reference to International Union for Conservation of Nature[18] standards in protected-area policy work provides an additional mission-consistent rationale: IUCN’s policy framing defines “gender-responsive” approaches as proactively identifying gender gaps and addressing them through coordinated actions, which mirrors the Coalition’s think-tank and governance-improvement approach. [19]

## Governance and mandatory building blocks

### Adoption, publication, and communication

**Commitment.** The Coalition adopts this GEP as a federation-level policy instrument and commits to publish it as a formal document on the Coalition website in Romanian and



English, signed and/or formally adopted by top management, and actively communicated internally and to member organisations. [20]

**Operational publication standard (minimum).** - Public webpage hosting: current GEP (PDF) + a short plain-language web summary. - Archived access: prior versions remain accessible (date-stamped). - Visibility: linked from “About/Coaliția” navigation (or equivalent), consistent with EU recommendations for “visible and searchable” publication. [5]

### Dedicated resources and gender expertise

EU guidance treats “dedicated resources and expertise” as a core compliance element and notes that a structured function/team is usually more effective than a single isolated person, while also recognising that smaller organisations should still designate a clear focal point with adequate resourcing. [20]

**Coalition implementation structure (rightsized for a small federation secretariat).** - **Board Sponsor for Gender Equality:** one Board member designated as sponsor, ensuring top-level backing and agenda time. - **GEP Coordinator (staff role):** a named person in the secretariat with explicit time allocation and authority to coordinate data, training, and reporting. - **GEP Working Group:** 5–7 people total, including (a) the GEP Coordinator, (b) at least one Board representative, (c) one person with HR/admin responsibilities (or equivalent), and (d) 2–3 representatives from member NGOs on a rotating basis.

**Minimum resourcing commitments (baseline).** - Staff time: **0.2 FTE** (or equivalent hours) for GEP coordination and monitoring; **0.05 FTE** for HR/admin data support. - Budget: **minimum €3,000/year or 1% of annual operational expenditure (whichever is higher)** for (a) training, (b) external gender expertise, and (c) safe reporting/safeguarding tools. - External expertise: at least **one** external gender-equality specialist engagement per year (audit support, training delivery, or policy review), consistent with EU emphasis on “expertise in gender equality.” [20]

### Data collection, monitoring, and training as mandatory process requirements

This GEP implements the four minimum process-related requirements articulated in EU guidance: public document; dedicated resources; sex/gender-disaggregated data and indicator-based reporting; and training/awareness raising for staff and decision-makers. [4]

Training is treated as ongoing and role-specific. EU guidance highlights organisation-wide engagement and explicitly references training for decision-makers and (optionally) unconscious bias content. [20]



**Coalition training commitment (minimum).** - Annual baseline training: gender equality foundations, respectful workplaces, and role-based responsibilities. - Decision-maker training: Board/working-group leads receive tailored training on bias-aware decision-making, inclusive facilitation, and safeguarding. - Refreshers: short annual refresh modules + onboarding module for new staff/Board members. [4]

## Data collection, monitoring, and reporting

### What data will be collected

The Coalition will collect and analyse sex/gender-disaggregated personnel data and report progress using indicators at least annually (the Coalition chooses annual reporting even though some EU guidance allows at least biennial reporting). [20]

**Coverage.** - Employees: contract type, seniority/grade, function (technical/advocacy/admin), working time, tenure. - Governance roles: Board, General Assembly officer roles, working-group chairs/leads, spokesperson roles and external representation delegations. - Trainees/volunteers/consultants: where practicable and proportionate, focusing on Coalition-controlled opportunities (internships, paid consultancies, speaker roles, etc.).

**Core categories (minimum).** - Sex/gender (self-reported; inclusive options, including “prefer not to say”). - Age band (optional; used for intersectional analysis where safe). - Caring responsibilities (optional; survey-based, anonymised). - Recruitment pipeline: applicants, shortlists, hires (aggregated).

EU equality data guidance defines “equality data” broadly as quantitative or qualitative information useful for describing and analysing the state of equality, and encourages safeguards and purpose-limited use. [21]

### Data protection and ethics

The Coalition will implement equality data collection with GDPR safeguards, including minimisation, role-based access, aggregation/anonymisation for reporting, and explicit documentation of lawful basis and retention limits. [22]

Where any collected information may fall into “special categories” (e.g., data concerning sex life or sexual orientation), GDPR Article 9 restrictions apply and require heightened safeguards and a valid exception. The Coalition therefore will not collect such attributes unless strictly necessary, voluntary, and protected by appropriate safeguards. [23]



## Indicators and reporting products

EIGE recommends gender-sensitive monitoring as a systematic assessment of design, implementation and results from a gender perspective, using data gathered across planning and implementation phases. [24] The Coalition will therefore produce two public-facing outputs:

- **Annual GEP Progress Note** (published on the Coalition website): key indicators, actions delivered, lessons learned, next-year priorities.
- **Internal dashboard** (confidential): fuller indicator set supporting course correction (e.g., recruitment pipeline data, culture survey findings).

EIGE's GEP monitoring resources also point to structured indicator sets (e.g., tools developed in EU-funded projects) as practical starting points. [25]

## Measures and targets

The measures below are written to be implementable in a federation/secretariat context and scalable across Coalition activities. Targets are SMART where feasible without a pre-existing baseline; where baseline data are not yet available, targets are defined as "baseline + improvement" with fixed deadlines for baseline completion.

### Work-life balance and organisational culture

EIGE frames work-life balance and organisational culture measures as those that ensure staff feel valued and welcome, supported by practical policies such as flexible working arrangements and support for caring responsibilities. [26]

**Measures 1) Flexible work policy and meeting norms** - Adopt a written flexible work policy (remote/hybrid options, predictable core hours, and a right-to-request flexibility for caregivers, aligned with EU work-life balance principles). [27]

- Apply meeting norms: no-meeting blocks, rotation of meeting times when working with geographically dispersed teams, and default scheduling inside core hours.

**2) Workload and burnout prevention** - Introduce quarterly workload check-ins (including "invisible labour" such as representation work and emotional labour in community conflict contexts). - Implement a "peak workload protocol" for major advocacy moments (redistribution, compensatory time, and clear escalation).

**3) Inclusive culture and communications** - Publish inclusive language guidance for Romanian and English communications and formalize expectations for respectful behaviour in Coalition spaces (events and digital communities). - Require gender-balanced



panels/speaker line-ups unless justified by topic-specific constraints (document “reasons” when exceptions occur).

4) **Fieldwork and travel safety** - Add gender-sensitive fieldwork and travel safeguards into project planning: risk assessment, buddy/check-in systems, safe accommodation criteria, and options to decline unsafe assignments without penalty—particularly relevant for environmental crime monitoring and community-facing work. [28]

**Targets** - By **Q3 2026**: flexible work and meeting norms adopted and communicated internally. - By **Q4 2026**: baseline culture survey completed (anonymised), with gender-disaggregated findings and priority actions identified. [29] - By **Q4 2027**: ≥80% of staff report that work-life balance policies are “clear and usable” (survey-based), and overtime “hotspots” are reduced year-on-year (internal dashboard).

## Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

EIGE highlights transparency of committee membership, clarity of criteria, and auditing selection/appointment processes as key levers for improving gender balance in decision-making bodies. [30]

**Measures 1) Parity standard for leadership bodies** - Adopt a “40% parity threshold” target for each gender in federation leadership and decision-making bodies (Board, key committees, working-group leads), drawing on parity-threshold framing used in European policy discourse. [31] - If parity is not met in a given election/appointment cycle, apply an “explain and corrective plan” rule: publish reasons (structural constraints) and commit to a corrective approach for the next cycle.

2) **Transparent selection and term limits** - Publish (internally at minimum, publicly where appropriate) the membership of all standing committees/working groups and their mandates. - Use fixed-term appointments for working-group leads; rotate roles to avoid informal gatekeeping and concentration of influence.

3) **Capacity-building for inclusive leadership** - Provide annual decision-maker training on inclusive facilitation, bias-aware evaluation, and safeguarding responsibilities. [4] - Establish a mentorship/sponsorship mechanism for emerging leaders from underrepresented genders within Coalition processes.

**Targets** - By **Q4 2026**: baseline mapping of leadership composition completed and published in the Annual GEP Progress Note. - By **Q4 2027**: all standing committees/working groups have written mandates and published membership lists (internal minimum). - By **Q4 2028**: parity threshold achieved in at least **80%** of Coalition decision-making bodies; remaining bodies have corrective plans in place.



## Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

EIGE emphasises critically reviewing selection procedures and remedying biases to ensure equal chances in recruitment and advancement. [32]

**Measures 1) Bias-resistant recruitment** - Standardise job descriptions: inclusive language, competency-based requirements, and removal of non-essential criteria that amplify biased screening. - Use structured interviews with scoring rubrics and mixed-gender interview panels (where feasible). - Track applicant → shortlist → hire flows by gender (aggregated).

**2) Transparent pay and progression** - Publish salary ranges for all vacancies and define internal pay bands (even if small), supporting pay fairness and transparency. - Conduct an annual pay review (gender-disaggregated) and document remediation actions, aligned with the direction of EU pay transparency rules. [33]

**3) Professional development** - Guarantee an annual training budget per staff member and formalise access criteria. - Create a transparent pathway for moving from internship/volunteer roles to paid roles (where organisational resources allow), with documented criteria.

**Targets** - By **Q3 2026**: recruitment procedure and templates adopted; all new recruitment uses structured scoring. - By **Q2 2027**: 100% of job ads include salary range; annual pay review completed and summarised (aggregated) in the GEP Progress Note. [33] - By **Q4 2028**: retention gaps by gender reduced year-on-year (baseline-dependent), with documented actions if disparities persist.

## Integration of the gender dimension into research and knowledge outputs

EU-level R&I guidance defines the “gender dimension” in content as analysing and accounting for possible differences between women and men (biological and socio-cultural features) in the content of projects, and notes that integrating this dimension is a requirement across EU research and innovation projects unless explicitly exempted by topic. [34]

EIGE similarly frames the inclusion of sex/gender as ensuring knowledge creation and transfer are free of gender bias. [35]

For the Coalition—whose work includes biodiversity monitoring, policy improvement, community engagement, and education—this thematic area is implemented as **gender mainstreaming in research, monitoring, policy analysis, training, and outreach**. [2]

**Measures 1) Gender-in-content screening for projects and outputs** - Introduce a one-page “Gender Relevance Check” at project design stage (including advocacy initiatives,



monitoring studies, and guidance documents). If gender is relevant, include: gender-sensitive research questions, sampling plans, and indicators.

2) **Stakeholder participation standards** - For consultations with communities and stakeholders, require a plan for inclusive participation (e.g., ensuring women's voices are represented, appropriate timing/venue, safe facilitation), consistent with the Coalition's community-focused governance approach. [2]

3) **Data practices in monitoring and studies** - Where people are surveyed or consulted (e.g., human-wildlife conflict, compensation rights, impacts of restrictions), collect and analyse sex/gender-disaggregated data when safe and appropriate. - Build gender competence for project leads via short modules and access to external expertise.

4) **Training/education content** - Update Coalition trainings (capacity building and education) to include at least one module on gender-aware participation and impact assessment in conservation governance.

**Targets** - By **Q4 2026**: Gender Relevance Check introduced and used in 100% of new project concept notes. - By **Q4 2027**: at least **70%** of new Coalition outputs/projects document whether and how gender was considered (or why it was not relevant), using the standard template. [36] - By **Q4 2028**: at least **2** Coalition-wide learning products (briefs/trainings) explicitly address gender in participation and environmental justice practice, aligned to Coalition mission. [2]

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

EIGE recommends a clear reporting policy with visible, robust reporting channels and clarity on investigation pathways, including how anonymous reports are handled. [37] In Romania's national framework, Government Decision 970/2023 provides a formal methodology for preventing and combating sex-based harassment and moral harassment at work, which this GEP treats as the minimum compliance baseline for federation-level procedures. [9]

**Measures 1) Comprehensive anti-harassment and safeguarding policy** - Adopt a federation policy covering: definitions; prohibited conduct; scope (office, fieldwork, online spaces, events); bystander expectations; and sanctions. - Align procedures with Romanian methodology expectations and integrate them into internal regulations and onboarding. [38]

2) **Reporting channels and non-retaliation** - Create at least **three** reporting routes: - internal: GEP Coordinator (or designated safeguarding officer), - governance: Board Sponsor, - external/independent: contracted specialist or partner NGO hotline contact



(annual contract). - Include a strict non-retaliation commitment and protections for complainants, witnesses, and whistleblowers.

3) **Case handling standards** - Set response time standards (acknowledgement within 5 working days; initial assessment within 15 working days). - Use a trauma-informed, confidentiality-respecting approach; document outcomes and corrective actions (aggregate reporting only).

4) **Protection in public-facing watchdog work** - Add safety protocols for online harassment/doxing and gendered threats, recognising documented patterns affecting women defenders. [13] - Provide access to psychosocial support referrals after high-risk cases (environmental crime monitoring, contentious litigation/SLAPP contexts).

5) **Anti-SLAPP support integration** - Because the Coalition already engages on SLAPP-related domains, integrate a staff protection addendum: legal risk triage, communication protocols, and support pathways, aligned with EU Anti-SLAPP developments protecting public participation. [39]

**Targets** - By **Q2 2026**: safeguarding policy adopted; reporting channels operational; case-handling SOP finalised. [40] - By **Q4 2026**: 100% of staff and Board members complete anti-harassment and safeguarding training; onboarding module in place for newcomers. [4] - By **Q4 2027**: annual aggregate reporting on incident management (counts, channels used, resolution time bands, actions taken) published with GDPR-compliant anonymisation. [41]

## Implementation timeline and sign-off

### Roadmap

This roadmap assumes adoption in **Q2 2026** and a three-year operational cycle, aligning with the Coalition's public "vision 2028" framing for broader institutional ambition. [42]

**Q2 2026 (Adoption and setup)** - Board and/or General Assembly adopts the GEP; top management signs/adopts; publish web page + PDF. [43]

- Appoint Board Sponsor, GEP Coordinator, and Working Group; approve minimum budget and time allocations. [20]

- Launch mandatory training for staff and decision-makers (baseline module). [4]

**Q3–Q4 2026 (Baseline and core policies)** - Conduct baseline audit: workforce and governance composition, recruitment practices, pay structure and progression, work-life flexibility usage, and culture survey. [44]

- Adopt: flexible work policy; recruitment SOP; safeguarding/anti-harassment policy;



fieldwork safety checklist. [45]

- Publish the first Annual GEP Progress Note (baseline + action status).

**2027 (Embed and scale)** - Implement gender-in-content screening across new projects and outputs; provide project-lead support. [36]

- Run refresher training and leadership-focused modules; update based on feedback. -

Mid-cycle review: adjust targets based on baseline data and lessons learned; publish the second Annual GEP Progress Note. [46]

**2028 (Consolidate and evaluate)** - Evaluate outcomes against targets; conduct follow-up culture survey and compare to baseline. - Publish final cycle report and adopt the next GEP cycle (2029–2031), maintaining public access to prior versions. [47]

### Accountability and review

- The Board Sponsor presents progress to the Board at least twice per year.
- The GEP Working Group meets quarterly and maintains an actions register with owners, deadlines, and evidence links, consistent with EU recommendations to be ready to provide evidence in potential checks and to document resourcing and actions over time. [43]

### Signature and adoption block

**Document title:** Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

**Validity period:** 2026–2028

**Adopted by:** Board and/or General Assembly of the Federation

**Publication:** Coalition website (public)

**Signed and/or adopted by top management (required):** [43]

**Name:** *Kudor Ștefan George* **Role:** Executive Director // 03.04.2026

**GEP Coordinator (accountable for implementation):**

Name: *Laura Coca* **Role:** Secretariat **Date:** 03.04.2026



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