

SEAI Interim Gender Equality Plan

October 2022

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland

SEAI is Ireland's national energy authority investing in, and delivering, appropriate, effective and sustainable solutions to help Ireland's transition to a clean energy future. We work with the public, businesses, communities and the Government to achieve this, through expertise, funding, educational programmes, policy advice, research and the development of new technologies.

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Contents

Interim Gender Equality Plan - Overview	3
SEAI's Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025	4
SEAI's Vision.....	4
SEAI's Mission	5
SEAI's Values.....	5
Profile of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in SEAI.....	5
Vision for 2022 and Strategic Pillars	6
Vision for 2022.....	6
Strategic Pillars	6
Strategic Enablers	7
What are strategic enablers?	7
Interim Gender Equality Plan.....	7
Gender Equality Plan Recommended Thematic Areas.....	7
Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression	7
Work Life Balance and Organisation Culture and Measures Against Gender Based Violence including Sexual Harassment	8
Integration of the Gender Dimension into Research	8
National Energy Research, Development and Demonstration (RD&D) funding programme.....	8
Governance and Implementation	9
Governance	9
Implementation.....	9
GEP Summary.....	12

Interim Gender Equality Plan - Overview

SEAI is a public organisation that funds research but also performs research in-house, and as such it falls into one of the categories of legal entities that must have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in place when applying for Horizon Europe funding. As part of the development of the current SEAI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, due for completion in late 2022 and informed by the work with Irish Centre for Diversity, SEAI has produced an interim GEP for incorporation into the future EDI Strategy.

A GEP is a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through a process of structural change. The objectives of a GEP are to address an organisation's policies and procedures, and also to consider how to evolve espoused values i.e., what people say they believe and any underlying assumptions (e.g., unconscious beliefs, thoughts, and feelings). There are four mandatory requirements which must be included in a GEP as set out in figure 1 below.

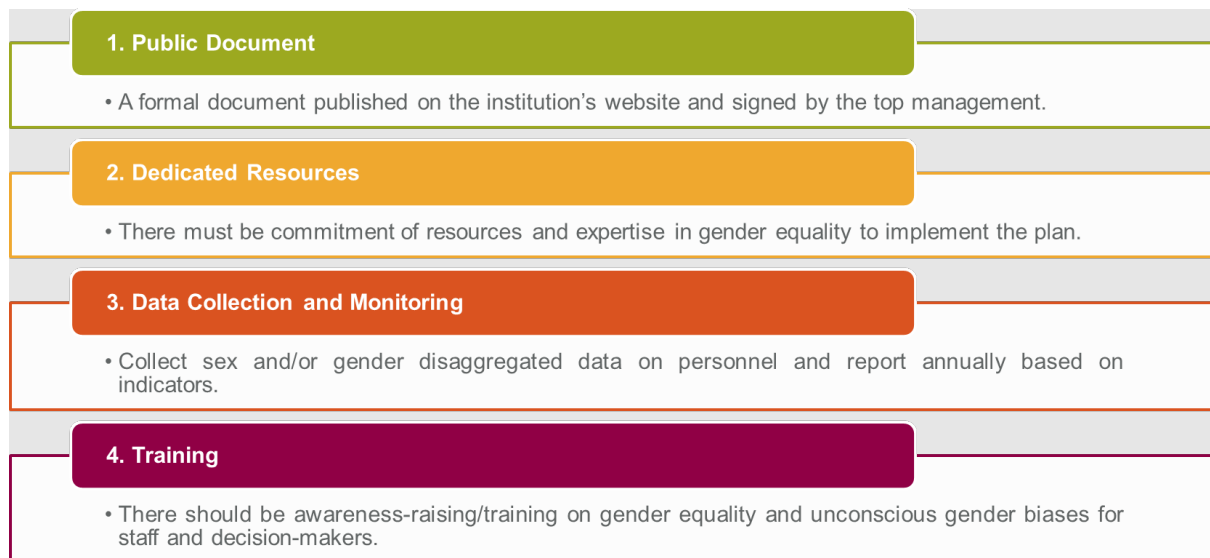


Figure 1: Four Mandatory Requirements of a GEP

The European Commission has highlighted five thematic areas that they recommend for consideration as part of the GEP. These thematic areas range from considering measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, to gender equality in recruitment and career progression.

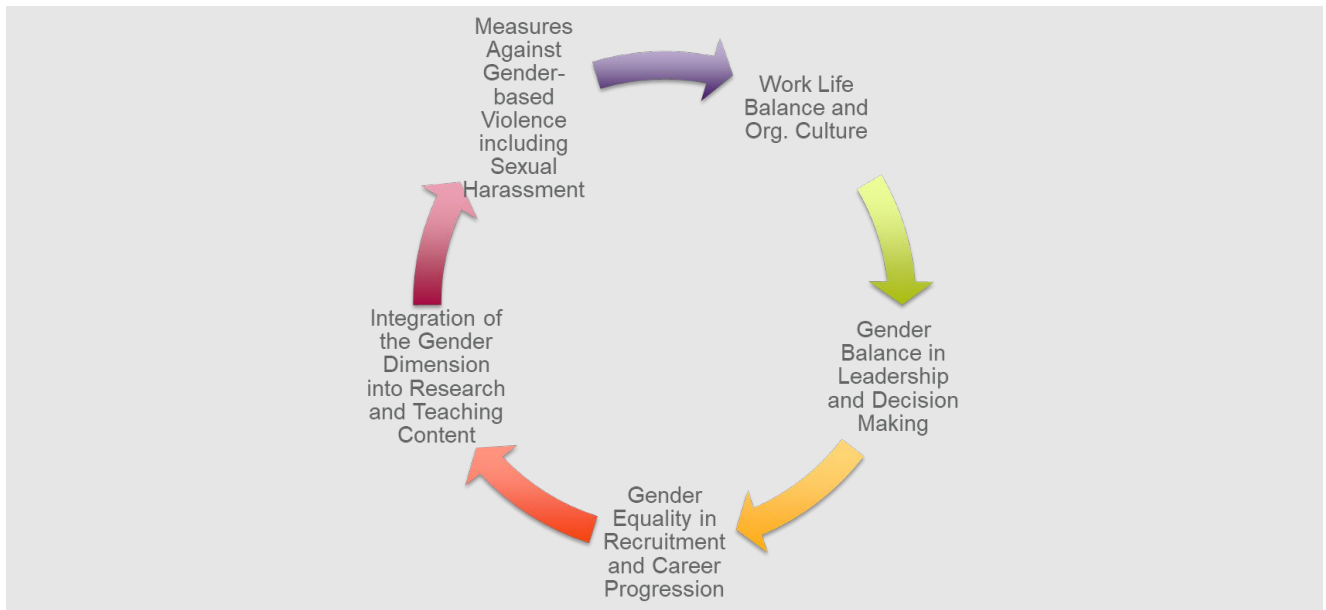


Figure 2: Five Recommended Thematic Areas for Consideration in the GEP

The [European Commission's Guidance on GEPs](#) states that while a GEP may be published alongside or within a wider action plan for broader inclusion and diversity, in order to meet the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion, it is essential that the GEP includes:

- ✓ specific commitments,
- ✓ specific goals,
- ✓ specific actions, and
- ✓ specific resources dedicated to improving gender equality within the organisation and its activities.

SEAI will incorporate this GEP into the broader SEAI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for 2022 – 2025 when it is completed in Q4 2022, to ensure a coherent approach to addressing gender equality as well as diversity and inclusion.

SEAI's Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025

SEAI has updated its Strategic Plan for 2022 – 2025 on [Delivering Ireland's Energy Revolution](#) with six strategic goals.

1. Delivery of our targets
2. Communication of our message
3. Collaborating with others
4. Building capacity and developing knowledge
5. Engaging with and supporting our staff
6. Strong Corporate Governance Framework

The fifth strategic goal, 'Engaging with and Supporting our Staff', includes leadership, development, collaboration, internal communication, culture, equality, diversity and respect. SEAI recognises the value of highly skilled and engaged staff and therefore as this strategic goal will focus on the further development and implementation of a suite of equality and diversity initiatives. These initiatives will be focused both externally on how SEAI engages and delivers on its mandate and internally on recruitment, development, promotion and family friendly work policies.

SEAI's Vision

SEAI's vision is to be a leading authority driving Ireland's sustainable energy transformation for the benefit of society.

SEAI's Mission

SEAI's mission is to be at the heart of delivering Ireland's energy revolution and to drive Ireland's reduction and replacement of fossil fuel usage. SEAI is a knowledge led organisation that partners with citizens, communities, businesses and Government. We are trusted collaborators, innovators, funders and educators.

SEAI's Values

In SEAI our work is guided by our values, which we continually utilise to measure ourselves against, both at an organisational level and an individual level. SEAI's values are passion, courage, innovation, trust, expertise and collaboration, and these are further explained below:

Table 1. SEAI's Values

Values	Explanation
Passion	We are enthusiastic about our role in working towards a sustainable energy society. We channel our passion and commitment into the way we operate to ensure that we will deliver for all of Irish society.
Courage	We understand the scale of Ireland's energy challenge and accept our role in meeting this challenge. We understand that every one of us has a part to play in delivering the energy changes that Ireland needs.
Innovation	We know that existing technologies and processes alone will not allow us to realise a fully sustainable energy society. We are continually learning, seeking new solutions, and constantly adapting to meet the demands of our fast-changing environment.
Trust	We appreciate the trust placed in us by citizens, communities, business and Government, without it we could not deliver on our objectives. We respect this trust and seek to maintain it by operating transparently, working with integrity, holding ourselves accountable and functioning independently.
Expertise	We recognise the importance technical expertise plays in achieving a sustainable energy future. We seek to further enhance this expertise within SEAI through research, critical thinking, consultation, listening, analysis and delivery.
Collaboration	We will not succeed by operating in isolation. We actively look to work with all those in Irish society; listening to ideas, acknowledging concerns, incorporating feedback and looking to build strong relationships that can support every individual, community and business in Ireland to be a part of the sustainable energy revolution.

Profile of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in SEAI

In 2019, SEAI conducted a detailed Employee Diversity Survey. The questions within this survey focused on topics such as gender, ethnicity, religious belief, disability, membership of the Travelling community and caring responsibilities. The results of the survey helped to inform the development of SEAI's 2019 – 2021 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. In 2022 SEAI worked with the Irish Centre for Diversity (ICD) to undertake a new survey to capture the views of staff on equality, diversity, and inclusion in SEAI, including topics covered in 2019, and this was an important opportunity for everyone to have their say and provide their feedback. The ICD is an organisation with expertise in equality, diversity and inclusion that works in partnership with companies and other organisations to foster EDI and create more equitable and inclusive workplaces. Investors in Diversity is Ireland's premier EDI accreditation mark, and it provides businesses with a framework for success to foster equality, diversity, and inclusion in their organisation. The ICD guides companies and organisations through the processes for achieving the different levels of the Investors in Diversity accreditation mark which in turn can increase creativity, widen talent pools and have a positive impact on business performance for

organisations. The current staff survey on equality diversity and inclusion is made up of 61 questions in total, with 49 questions covering a wide range of topics such as equality/discrimination, agile working, diversity, biases, EDI initiatives and 12 questions specifically focused on staff members.

Vision for 2022 and Strategic Pillars

Vision for 2022

SEAI's vision for 2022 is twofold; firstly, SEAI is focused on specific actions related to integrating the gender dimension into research as set out in the Interim Action Plan. In parallel, SEAI is concentrating on listening to the views of staff members through the staff survey being facilitated by the ICD and using the outputs from this survey as the basis for SEAI's EDI Strategy for 2022 – 2025.

Strategic Pillars

SEAI is reviewing the five strategic pillars that had formed the basis for its 2019 – 2021 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and the objective areas to ascertain whether these should be amended for the 2022 – 2025 EDI Strategy and to ensure that equality and gender are fully incorporated into the pillars and objective areas for 2022 – 2025.

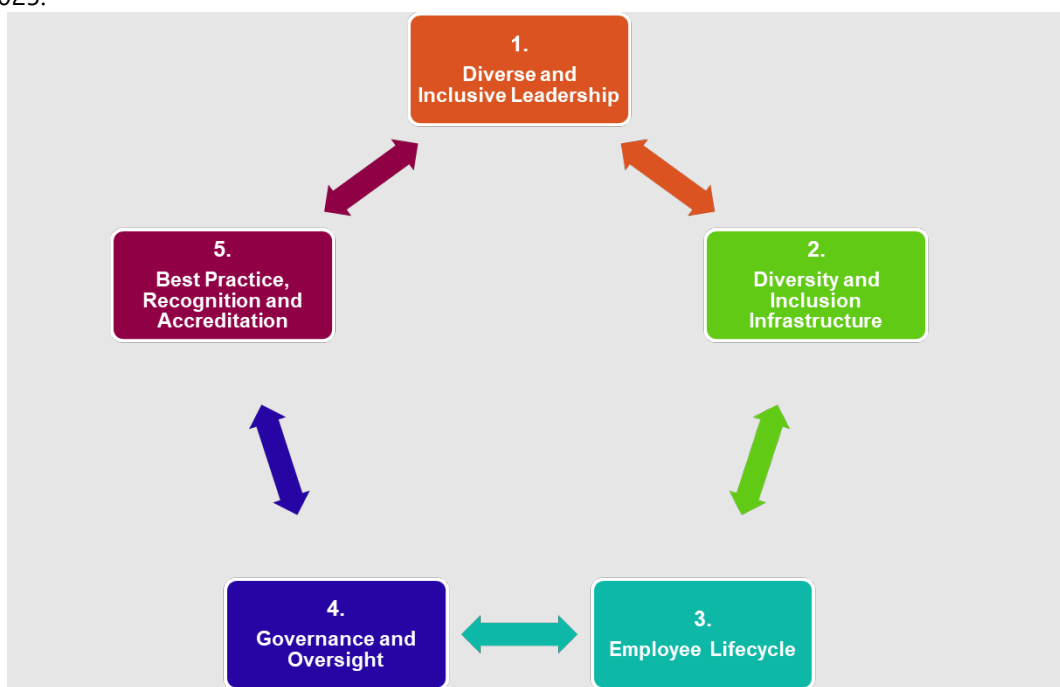


Figure 3: The Five Strategic EDI Pillars

SEAI had set out a number of objective areas under each of the given strategic pillars as part of its 2019 – 2021 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and these are now being reviewed. Table 2 below sets out the objective areas being reviewed.

Table 2. The Objective Areas under the Five Strategic Pillars

Strategic Pillar	Objective Areas
1. Diverse and Inclusive Leadership	Leadership Commitment D&I Strategy Leadership Training
2. Diversity and Inclusion Infrastructure	D&I Policies and Procedures D&I Promotion and Awareness Adoption of Inclusion Index

3. Employee Lifecycle	Talent Attraction Training and Development Talent Retention
4. Governance and Oversight	Diversity and Inclusion Committee Diversity and Equality Data Best Practice D&I Governance Structures
5. Best Practice, Recognition and Accreditation	External profile External recognition

Strategic Enablers

What are strategic enablers?

Strategic enablers are capabilities, resources or processes which an organisation can utilise to execute its strategy more efficiently and effectively. It is important that SEAI has dedicated resources that can implement the actions that are set out in this interim Gender Equality Plan but also the more comprehensive action plan that will be form part of the 2022 – 2025 EDI Strategy. The main strategic enablers are the EDI committee and all the staff members that will work on implementing the action plan.

Interim Gender Equality Plan

The interim GEP is based on actions for delivery in 2022 and the primary focus of the plan is about embedding the gender dimension across all aspects of the organisation and considering data collection for monitoring and inclusion in the next SEAI annual report. A more detailed plan will be produced as part of SEAI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy

Gender Equality Plan Recommended Thematic Areas

SEAI has made progress in a number of the five recommended thematic areas set out by the Commission in the GEP Guidance. The areas of focus are:

1. Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression
2. Work Life Balance and Organisation Culture and Measures Against Gender Based Violence including Sexual Harassment
3. Integration of the Gender Dimension into Research

Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression

There is a comprehensive Recruitment and Selection policy in place with accessible language. SEAI is an equal opportunities employer and encourages applications from people from diverse backgrounds and under-represented groups including ethnic minorities and disabled people. SEAI aims to measure experience through the quality of the experience gained rather than the quantity of experience in years. The 'Experience and Personal Qualities' section of job advertisements outline the criteria that are essential for the role and any criteria that may be desirable.

HR make every effort to circulate to all employees the details of any position or work opportunity as they arise. Job opportunities are posted on the SEAI website and sent to employees via email. Where practicable all employees on protective leave (such as maternity, parental leave, etc.) are informed of any vacancies that arise during their leave. When placing an external advertisement, SEAI uses various media sources in order to allow all potential candidates to have an equal opportunity to apply for the position. All advertisements contain a statement of SEAI's commitment to its Equal Opportunities, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy.

Numerical data on staff at all levels within SEAI was collated and analysed to identify trends for male and female employees for 2018, 2019 and 2022. Staff levels have increased by 36% from April 2019 – April 2022 and the overall gender balance has switched from 52% male/48% female in 2019 to 52% female/48% male in 2022.

Disaggregated data across all levels of the organisation will continue to be monitored.

Work Life Balance and Organisation Culture and Measures Against Gender Based Violence including Sexual Harassment

Progress on the thematic areas of (i) work life balance and organisation culture and (ii) measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment have been made by SEAI through the establishment of policies relevant for both thematic areas.

During a review by the Irish Centre for Diversity in 2022 it was found that accessible, relevant policies are in place which represent many different aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion. Many policies demonstrate SEAI's dedication to developing and maintaining an inclusive, supportive culture and diverse workforce. Policies reassure employees that SEAI aims to ensure all employees and customers are treated fairly.

Existing policies and procedures demonstrated that bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated, and any incidents will be dealt with seriously, swiftly and confidentially. Employees will be treated with dignity and respect. Additional policies are in place, such as the Anti-Fraud, Parental Leave, Parent's Leave and Carer's Leave policies.

Policies are outlined during Staff Inductions and are available to all staff through SharePoint. Employees are asked to sign Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy, Disciplinary Procedure and Grievance Policy to confirm that they have read and understood them.

SEAI does not have policies in place for Gender Identity, Modern Day Slavery, or Mental Health at Work, and policy statements will be introduced in these areas.

SEAI was awarded the Silver Investors in Diversity accreditation in 2022. This accreditation was awarded by the Irish Centre for Diversity after SEAI provided evidence that it has relevant diversity and inclusion policies in place, that these policies are effectively communicated to staff and that the senior leadership team within SEAI has undertaken diversity and inclusion training. Having the Investors in Diversity Silver accreditation means that SEAI has a strong foundation in place that can be used to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into the wider organisation systems to help SEAI to become a more diverse and inclusive organisation.

Integration of the Gender Dimension into Research

This is an area of particular focus for SEAI in terms of its interim actions for 2022.

National Energy Research, Development and Demonstration (RD&D) funding programme

SEAI runs a National Energy Research, Development and Demonstration (RD&D) funding programme on an annual basis. The objectives of the SEAI RD&D Funding Programme are:

- To accelerate the development and deployment of competitive energy-related products, processes and systems in Ireland.
- To support solutions that enable technical and other barriers to energy market uptake to be overcome.
- To grow Ireland's national capacity to access, develop and apply international high standards of energy RD&D.
- To provide guidance and support to policy makers and public bodies through results, outcomes and learning from supported projects.

The SEAI RD&D Funding Programme is open to public and private sector organisations that are based in the Republic of Ireland and who wish to carry out projects in Ireland. SEAI accepts applications from companies, 3rd level Educational Bodies, public sector bodies and semi-state bodies as long as they are based in the Republic of Ireland.

In 2022 a number of measures were introduced to embed the Gender Dimension in the RD&D programme.

1. Gender considerations question included in the Relevance and Impact section of the application form and ask applicants to complete the table with actions.
2. Note inserted in the application form guidance that states that there will be no discrimination due to gender in the evaluation of projects.
3. Gender equality aspect introduced in the Evaluation Process and Criteria.
4. Gender-based topic added to the new SEAI-based Fellowship call.

On completion of the 2022 RD&D process the effectiveness of the changes to the application form and the evaluation process will be assessed. Further changes including a Maternity Policy are being planned for the 2023 RD&D Call.

Governance and Implementation

Governance

The SEAI Code of Governance Framework, set out in accordance with the [Sustainable Energy Act 2002](#) and informed by the [Framework for Corporate and Financial Governance](#) and the [Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies \(revised in 2016\)](#), provides responsibility to the Board for ensuring that decisions on all major items of expenditure should be aligned with medium to long-term strategies to ensure that such expenditure is focussed on clearly defined objectives and outcomes.

The EDI Committee, on behalf of the Executive of the SEAI, have responsibility for developing and making recommendations on the SEAI EDI strategy, and for managing the implementation of the approved strategic plan and actions. The Committee reports to the SEAI Executive Leadership Team (ELT) on a quarterly basis to provide a briefing on the implementation of this Strategy. The committee is chaired by a member of the Executive Leadership Team and the ELT provides oversight on the work of the Committee in this regard. The Committee will report to the Board annually. For more details, please see the Committee's Terms of Reference which can be found in Appendix 1.

Implementation

The EDI Committee and any associated action plan working groups will be driving force behind the implementation of the action plan. The table below outlines the interim actions and the implementation progress that has been made with regard to these actions.

Table 3. Interim Actions and Implementation Plan

Action	Implementation Plan	Responsibility and Resources
<p>Policies: Review gender specific training needs identified in ICD survey or within Performance for Growth (PGP) programme</p>	<p>As part of the development of the SEAI EDI Strategy, due for completion by November 2022, and informed by the work with ICD, SEAI will identify a suite of training requirements. Starting with Senior Managers, the most effective ways to engage all staff in this programme will be identified. Training should be provided to all employees when a new policy is introduced or revised. Line-managers should ensure that employees review their understanding of policies and procedures during PGP reviews.</p>	<p>EDI Committee HR Department Training and development budget</p>
<p>Policies: Develop Gender Identity, Modern Day Slavery and Mental Health at Work policy statements</p>	<p>Consider all recommendations made by the Irish Centre for Diversity regarding the review of existing policies from a gender equality perspective. This could include using gender-neutral terms throughout policies. Develop a review process with the development of the EDI Strategy 2022-2025. Consider any gender recommendations stemming from the EDI Staff survey.</p>	<p>EDI Committee HR Department Training and development budget</p>
<p>Recruitment: Disaggregate data on gender for staff at all levels to identify any inequalities</p>	<p>In line with recommendations from the EDI Staff survey and as the company continues to grow, identify a gender balance plan for the proportion of mid- and senior level management positions by 2025. Provide leadership and management training for mid-level executives within this time. Assess the effectiveness of data collection measures.</p>	<p>EDI Committee HR Department Training and development budget</p>

<p>RDD Funding Programme: Include gender consideration questions in the Relevance and Impact section of the application form and ask applicants to complete the table with actions.</p>	<p>In the Gender Considerations section applicants are asked to complete a table with further details on gender balance and any potential gender dimension within the proposed research activities. A number of specific questions are asked such as 'describe how gender balance will be fostered within the project team and list concrete actions demonstrating how gender balance will be fostered. Applicants are also asked to describe any potential gender dimension of their proposed research activity.</p>	<p>EDI Committee and RD&D team</p>
<p>RDD Funding Programme: Include a gender equality aspect in one of the sections of the Evaluation Process and Criteria. Establish appropriate support and training materials for evaluators.</p>	<p>RD&D applications are assessed under a number of evaluation criteria such as (i) excellence and innovation, (ii) relevance and impact, and (iii) quality and efficiency of implementation. One of the sub-criteria under the 'quality and efficiency of implementation is the 'strength of the management and oversight arrangements including risk management and gender equality'.</p>	<p>EDI Committee and RD&D team Support and training materials for reviewers</p>
<p>RDD Funding Programme: Insert a note in the application form guidance document about no gender discrimination in project evaluations.</p>	<p>A note was included in the guidance document for the application form which states that there will be no discrimination due to gender in the evaluation of projects.</p>	<p>EDI Committee and RD&D team</p>
<p>Recruitment and RDD Funding Programme: Include a gender-based topic in the SEAI-based Fellowships 2022.</p>	<p>Put in place a call to recruit a SEAI-based Research Fellow for the topic 'Investigating gender aspects of Ireland's clean energy transition'</p>	<p>EDI Committee HR Department</p>

RDD Funding Programme: Assess the effectiveness of the changes to the application form and the evaluation process.

At the end of 2022 put in place data collection and evaluation measures to assess the impact of changes on the overall gender balance and dimensions within the research programme compared to previous years.
Develop a mechanism to measure the effectiveness of changes made over subsequent years.

EDI Committee
RD&D Team

Other areas and future work: Identify if gender considerations, data collection and monitoring measures could be introduced in other aspects and across other grant programmes within SEAI.

Work with members of EDI Committee to identify other areas of SEAI programmes that may benefit from gender equality measures.

EDI Committee

GEP Summary

GEP Requirement	SEAI Activity
Public Document	SEAI’s GEP has been approved by its senior management team and Board and a summary of the document is available on the SEAI website.
Dedicated Resources	There are dedicated resources within SEAI who will be responsible for implementing the plan including the EDI committee and a member of the HR staff dedicated to both learning and development and EDI.
Data Collection and Monitoring	SEAI is committed to gathering data and monitoring its progress against the action plan it has established. [A section of SEAI’s annual report will provide high level statistics on the gender balance within the organisation across staff grades.]
Training	The senior leadership team within SEAI have received Inclusive Leadership training facilitated by the Irish Centre for Diversity (ICD). Some of the learning objectives that were covered in the training were (i) considering the characteristics of an inclusive leader. (ii) understanding unconscious bias and how it might have an impact on culture, organisational processes and recruitment. (iii) recognising the value and benefits of inclusive leadership and positive role modelling. SEAI also plans to roll out further unconscious bias/EDI training for all staff members.



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