

*Approved by Order No. PД09-4/05.01.2022  
of Nikolay Denkov, Minister of Education and Science*

**PLAN**  
**OF ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE EQUALITY BETWEEN**  
**WOMEN AND MEN IN THE MINISTRY**  
**OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE**  
**2021-2027**

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Equality between women and men is a fundamental right, a common value of the European Union and a necessary condition for achieving the Union's goals of growth, employment and social cohesion. Equality between women and men is an essential element of democracy and a prerequisite for the full exercise of human rights. It is key to achieving social justice and cohesion, sustainable, smart and inclusive economic growth. It affects all areas of life. That is why integrating the principle of equality between women and men in all policies is a necessary condition and guarantee for the good governance and progress of society.

In the field of equality between women and men, efforts are focused on ensuring conditions for the equality between women and men in all areas of public life, prevention and protection against discrimination.

The legal guarantees for equality and equal treatment of women and men are included in the current Bulgarian legislation: the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Labour Code, the Social Security Code, the Protection against Discrimination Act, the Law on Equality between Women and Men, the Social Services Act, the Employment Promotion Act, the Protection against Domestic Violence Act, the Civil Servants Act, the National Strategy for Promoting Equality between Women and Men for the period 2021-2030, adopted by Decision No. 969 of the Council of Ministers of 30.12.2020, the National Action Plan for Promoting the Equality between Women and Men 2021-2022, adopted by Decision No. 454 of the Council of Ministers of 17 June 2021, etc.

The policy of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is aimed at promoting equality of women and men, which is to be based on the established legal guarantees for non-discrimination on the grounds of sex in positions requiring equal complexity and responsibility, at the same level of education and professional qualification. Equality between women and men is one of the main principles set out in the Code of Conduct of State Administration Employees and the Code of Conduct of Employees in the Ministry of Education and Science. The MES follows these principles and applies them, striving to prevent their violation, and in cases of established violations, measures are taken to seek and implement liability.

In order to overcome the insufficient provision of quality and affordable care services, which is one of the main drivers of inequality of women and men in the labour market, the Ministry of Education and Science has developed an Ordinance on the terms and conditions for providing

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and paying funds from the state budget to compensate for the expenses incurred by the parents for the upbringing and education of the children who are not admitted in state or municipal kindergartens or schools due to lack of vacancies (adopted by Decree of the Council of Ministers No. 76 of 5.03.2021, published in SG, No. 20 of 09.03.2021) This ordinance regulates the conditions and procedure for providing and paying funds from the state budget to compensate the parents of children from three years of age to their entry in first grade, directly related to their upbringing and education, in case the children are not admitted in state or municipal kindergartens and schools due to lack of places for preschool education in them.

The Plan to Ensure Equality between Women and Men in the Ministry of Education and Science aims to support the implementation of the unified policy for equality of women and men, to raise awareness of the equality of women and men and the importance of overcoming the related stereotypes in the Ministry of Education and Science.

This plan is in line with the UN SDG 5 “Achieving Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls”, as well as with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 <sup>1</sup> and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union , Title III: Equality, Art. 23 - Equality between women and men<sup>2</sup>.

The activities are structured in the following areas:

- ***Balance between professional and personal life of employees and organisational culture***

The Republic of Bulgaria is an EU member state which, through the provisions of the Labour Code (LC), the Civil Servants Act (CSA) and the Ordinance on Working Hours, Breaks and Holidays, establishes equality between women and men in their right to leave in order to raise a child. The legislation establishes the possibility for parental leave to be used by both the mother and the father, which ensures a better balance

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<sup>1</sup> (COM(2020) 152), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/BG/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>, last access on 17.12.2021 r.

<sup>2</sup> Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union , Title III: Equality, Art. 23 - Equality between women and men, <https://fra.europa.eu/bg/eu-charter/article/23-ravenstvo-mezhdu-zhenite-i-mzhete>

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between work and personal life of parents with young children and creates an opportunity for the equal sharing of responsibilities between the parents for the care of their children. In addition, the amounts of the types of parental leave determined are the largest compared to the amounts determined in the national legislations of the other EU member states. The MES strictly applies the national legislation regarding the granting of parental leave. It is possible, at the request of a full-time employee, for them to be reassigned for a specified period of not less than three months to the same part-time position.

A flexible organisation of working hours has been introduced for the employees of the MES, where it is envisaged that the working hours of the employees in a 5-day working week are 8 hours a day and 40 hours a week, with variable time limits from 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and obligatory presence in the period from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and in these cases outside the time of the obligatory presence the employees can fulfill their daily working hours on certain days on the next or on another day of the same working week. In this way, conditions are created for finding a balance between the professional and personal life of the employees and the organisational culture.

- ***Balance between women and men in management and decision making***

Equal participation of women and men in leadership positions and decision-making is an important condition for effective democracy and good governance. Ensuring equal access to management positions and decision-making is a key element in achieving positive effects and benefits in the management of the administration in the field of education as well.

- ***Ensuring equality between women and men in the recruitment of human resources and in providing opportunities for career development of the employees***

In the MES, equal opportunities for men and women are guaranteed by applying the principle of equality between women and men in the selection of employees and in the career growth. When announcing a vacancy/job, no requirements are imposed that constitute direct or indirect discrimination based on sex. The minimum and specific requirements for holding both expert and managerial positions, which are set when

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applying, are limited only to those provided for in the regulations. The evaluation of the candidates takes into account the result shown by them, formed by the evaluation of their competencies.

The basic monthly salary of the employees in the MES is determined by levels and degrees, taking into account the level of the position held, the qualification and the professional experience, thus creating preconditions for equality between women and men.

For the employees of the MES, trainings are planned annually, and they are tailored only to the needs of the employees for raising their qualification, depending on the specifics of their positions, which guarantees equality between women and men. In accordance with the regulations, every newcomer to the civil service for the first time, as well as every first-time employee at a managerial position in the MES undergoes mandatory training, which again guarantees the principle of equality between women and men.

- ***Integrating the dimension of women and men in research and educational content***

Equality between women and men in research has been a key priority in the European Research Area (ERA) policies since its launch in 2000, which aims to remove barriers to the recruitment, retaining and career development of women researchers and to eliminate imbalances between women and men in decision-making. This priority is also maintained in the EC's plans for the new ERA, based on excellence. The new ERA focuses more on women's participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and encourages entrepreneurship.

The MES, in its role as an institution implementing the national policy in the field of science and research, communicates with and stimulates higher education institutions (HEIs) and research organizations (ROs) regarding the principle of equality between women and men in the participation in these organizations and research projects. The Bulgarian legislation in the field of science, namely the Law on the Promotion of Research and the Act for the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, treats male and female researchers equally.

The MES regularly informs HEIs and ROs about trainings by the European Commission regarding the observance of gender equality in their participation in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation "Horizon Europe" (2021-2027), as well as regarding the need to draw up a Plan for equality between women and men on their part.

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The policy of the Ministry of Education and Science in order to prevent and fight negative gender stereotypes and sexism is reflected in Ordinance No. 13 on the civic, health, environmental and intercultural education, where these topics are considered through different prisms: civic, health and intercultural education, thus creating the preconditions for a more comprehensive vision for their solution.

The issues in eliminating discrimination against women and equality between women and men are an element of civic education, implemented at various stages, integrated into other subjects or as a separate subject. This includes recognizing gender discrimination, explaining the origin, functioning and impact of stereotypes and prejudices on interpersonal relationships, criticizing the impact of stereotypes and prejudices on individual thinking and behaviour and attitudes to fight discrimination.

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

By Order No. ПД 09-1776 of 26.08.2021 of the Minister of Education and Science, a Code of Conduct for Employees of the Ministry of Education and Science was approved. The Code sets out the principle of equality, where the employee shall treat everyone with respect when performing his/her official duties, respecting the rights and dignity of the individual and shall not allow discrimination based on race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, origin, religion, education, beliefs, political affiliation, personal and social status or property status or on any other grounds established by law or in an international treaty to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party. Employees should not allow mental, physical, sexual or any other form of harassment against another person, both at work and outside.

The Code of Conduct for the Employees of the Ministry of Education and Science is subject to mandatory observance by all employees in the Ministry, regardless of the position held and their level in the official hierarchy. The direct supervisor is obliged to control the compliance of the employee's behavior with the established rules and to report any violations to the disciplinary body.

It is provided that any violation of the rules established by the Code is accepted as a basis for seeking and exercising disciplinary responsibility, in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Servants Act and the Labour Code.

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- ***Monitoring of the plan of activities to ensure equality between women and men in the Ministry of Education and Science, 2021-2027***

Monitoring of the implementation of this plan shall be carried out by the official collection and processing of data voluntarily provided by employees, in compliance with the principles and rules of personal data protection according to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation/GDPR) and especially Art. 28 of the GDPR, the Personal Data Protection Act and the applicable national legislation, as well as by analyzing the provided data regarding the ratio of men to women in the administration, considered in different categories. Detailed information on the activities, target groups and indicators for achieving the planned activities are systematized in the table below:

	Planned activities	Target group	Area of impact	Indicator	Deadline	Responsible units/persons
1.	Systematic data collection and monitoring of the percentage of women: men					
1.1	Extraction from the human resources management system of data on the MES employees	MES employees	Equality between women and men in recruitment and career development	Reducing gender differences	Ongoing	Human Resources and Administrative Services Directorate
1.2	Extraction from the human resources management system of data on the MES management staff	Management staff	Equality between women and men in the recruitment of candidates	Reducing gender differences	Ongoing	Human Resources and Administrative

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						Services Directorate
1.3	Extraction from the human resources management system of data on the composition of the political cabinet of the Minister of Education and Science	Members of the political cabinet appointed by the Minister	Balance between women and men in management and decision making	Reducing gender differences	Ongoing	Minister of Education and Science
1.4	Collection of data on candidates who have won competitive procedures	Employees and management staff of the MES	Equality between women and men in the recruitment of candidates	Reducing gender differences	Ongoing	Human Resources and Administrative Services Directorate
1.5	Collection of data on the percentage of submitted to satisfied applications for parental leave	Employees, management staff and members of the political cabinet of the Ministry of Education and Science	Work-personal life balance	100%	Ongoing	Human Resources and Administrative Services Directorate
2	Providing information for inclusion in the Annual Report on the Implementation of the Gender Equality	Management staff of the MES	Equality between women and men	Information provided for the report	Annually	Human Resources and Administrative Services Directorate



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	Strategy 2018-2023 of the Council of Europe					
3	Collection of data on submitted complaints about cases of gender-based violence, incl. sexual harassment	Employees, management staff and members of the political cabinet of the Ministry of Education and Science	Limiting, thwarting, preventing and counteracting all possible forms and manifestations of harassment, violence, discrimination based on sex	Information database	Ongoing	Inspectorate of the MES,  Human Resources and Administrative Services Directorate
4	Integration of information materials about gender equality in the training of staff and management	Employees, management staff and members of the political cabinet of the Ministry of Education and Science	Raising awareness and commitment to the issue of equality between women and men	Available information materials	Annually	Human Resources and Administrative Services Directorate, Institute of Public Administration  , external partner training organizations
5	Conducting trainings/seminars on issues	Employees, management staff and members of the political	Developing the organizational culture	Trainings/seminars, Available information materials	Annually	Human Resources and Administrative Services

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	regarding the equality between women and men	cabinet of the Ministry of Education and Science	regarding the equality between women and men			Directorate, Institute of Public Administration, external partner training organizations
6	Conducting an internal survey of attitudes	Employees, management staff and members of the political cabinet of the Ministry of Education and Science	Balance between professional and personal life and organizational culture	Survey conducted	Annually Once a year	Human Resources and Administrative Services Directorate