



25
YEARS
1998 — 2023

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

2026



POLARISE
SOCIETÀ PER AZIENDE
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Contextual Framework.....	2
2. Objectives.....	3
3. About PIEP	4
3.1 Who we are	4
3.2 What moves us.....	5
3.3 Our goal	6
3.4 What we do	7
4. Diagnosis	7
5. Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for 2026	10
6. Monitoring and Follow-up	14
7. Conclusions	14
Annex A	15

Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2026

Executive Summary

Promoting gender equality is not only an ethical obligation but also a key strategy for achieving sustainable organisational success. In this regard, PIEP adopts gender equality as a core institutional principle and formally commits to ensuring a plural, inclusive, and non-discriminatory working environment. Through the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP), PIEP establishes a formal governance framework, institutional mechanisms, and organisational practices that ensure the creation and monitoring of equal opportunities, as well as the prevention, mitigation, and elimination of all forms of gender-based inequality across all areas of the institution.

This document sets out PIEP's Gender Equality Plan. The plan was developed on the basis of the collection and analysis of quantitative data (statistical data disaggregated by gender). The analysis of these data enabled the establishment of a set of appropriate measures aimed at promoting greater gender equality within the institution.

The plan seeks to address the interdependence of the various dimensions of work, from recruitment - by promoting inclusive communication practices - to fostering a balanced integration of professional and personal life.

For PIEP, gender equality is essential, as it ensures equal rights, freedoms, guarantees, opportunities and recognition for women and men. It contributes to building a culture that attracts talent and promotes both personal and professional development, with a strong emphasis on flexibility, collaboration and the engagement of all. The aim is to recognise excellence and merit, value individuality, and provide an environment of well-being, respect, equal opportunities and productivity for everyone.

Together, we are building a fairer and more equitable future for all.

1. Contextual Framework

In accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, gender equality is recognised as a fundamental human right essential for societal development and for the full participation of all individuals, regardless of gender. It is a core principle that promotes social, economic and cultural justice for all members of society.

Globally, under the 2030 Agenda's principle "No one left behind", the United Nations reinforce this commitment through Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), aimed at achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls, and eliminating structural barriers to equality between women and men.

A GEP constitutes a strategic and structural instrument aimed at promoting sustainable institutional change through the systematic integration of gender equality principles across all organisational policies, procedures and decision-making processes. Rather than isolated actions, the Plan ensures the transversal incorporation of gender equality (gender mainstreaming) into governance, human resources management, recruitment, career progression, remuneration policies, research activities and organisational culture². In 2021, the European Commission published the document "Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (GEP)", establishing that organisations applying individually for funding under Horizon Europe, and belonging to the category of legal entities established in EU Member States or associated countries, are required to have a GEP in place for calls with deadlines from 2022 onwards.

Additionally, Regulatory Order No. 18/2019 (Despacho Normativo n.º 18/2019)¹, goes beyond gender equality and establishes six areas for the preparation of annual equality plans, namely (i) equality in access to employment; (ii) initial and continuous training; (iii) equality in working conditions; (iv) equal pay; (v) parental protection; and (vi) work-life balance.

At national level, Portuguese legislation reflects the commitment to gender equality, which is safeguarded by the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic². Article 13 (Principle of Equality) establishes that no one may be privileged, favoured, prejudiced, deprived of any right or exempted from any duty on grounds of sex, among other factors.

¹ Despacho Normativo n.º 18/2019. Diário da República n.º 117/2019, Série II de 2019-06-21. <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/despacho-normativo/18-2019-122630001>

² Constituição da República Portuguesa Sétima Revisão Constitucional – 2005. Diário da República, n.º 155 – I Série - A, de 12 de agosto de 2005. <https://www.parlamento.pt/ArquivoDocumentacao/Documents/CRPVIIrevisao.pdf>

Additionally, Law No. 60/2018³ promotes equal pay between women and men for equal work or work of equal value. Council of Ministers Resolution No. 61/2018⁴, updated by Council of Ministers Resolution No. 92/2023⁵, approved the Action Plans under the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination (ENIND) - Portugal + Igual (2018–2030), outlining measures to eliminate gender disparities across all sectors of society.

These Action Plans define strategic and specific objectives concerning non-discrimination on the grounds of sex and equality between women and men, as well as combating discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, among others.

These instruments recognise equality and non-discrimination as essential conditions for building a sustainable future for Portugal, ensuring the protection of human rights and the participation of all.

2. Objectives

At PIEP, gender equality represents a commitment to progress towards a more just and sustainable future for all. Accordingly, the main objectives of PIEP's Gender Equality Plan are:

- Foster an inclusive organisational culture that values and respects all employees, regardless of gender.
- Equip managers and staff with the knowledge and awareness required to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion across all areas of the organisation.
- Ensure equal opportunities in recruitment, selection, promotion and career development, with decisions based on merit and competencies.

To achieve these objectives, the Plan will be implemented through the following measures:

- Developing and formalising policies and procedures to ensure gender equality across all areas of the organisation.
- Delivering regular training on gender equality, diversity and inclusion for all employees.

³ Lei n.º 60/2018. Diário da República n.º 160/2018, Série I de 2018-08-21. <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/lei/60-2018-116130014>

⁴ Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 61/2018. Diário da República n.º 97/2018, Série I de 2018-05-21. <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/resolucao-conselho-ministros/61-2018-115360036>

⁵ Resolução do Conselho de Ministros n.º 92/2023. Diário da República n.º 157/2023, Série I de 2023-08-14. <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/resolucao-conselho-ministros/92-2023-219915287>

- Establishing performance indicators related to gender equality, with systematic monitoring and transparent reporting mechanisms.
- Creating clear communication channels and confidential reporting mechanisms for cases of gender-based discrimination or harassment, ensuring impartial investigations and appropriate disciplinary measures.

Our Gender Equality Plan includes measures aimed at promoting equal opportunities and fostering an inclusive and equitable working environment for all employees. We are committed to implementing policies and practices that ensure equality across all areas of the organisation.

By implementing this Plan, we strengthen our organisational culture, foster innovation and create an environment in which everyone can thrive. We believe that promoting equality enhances the working environment, stimulates productivity and supports talent retention.

3. About PIEP

3.1 Who we are

Innovation Centre in Polymer Engineering - PIEP, as an Interface of the University of Minho and a Portuguese Technology and Innovation Centre, presents itself as the industry's innovation partner for the development of more sustainable, smart and value-added products and technological solutions that respond to the challenges of our society.

Established on 13 December 2000 through an initiative of industry and in close collaboration with the Department of Polymer Engineering of the University of Minho (DEP-UM) and the Institute for Support to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Innovation (IAPMEI), PIEP aims to deliver excellence in providing products and services promptly, addressing the R&D+i needs of companies in the plastics sector and related industries. This is achieved through innovation activities, technology transfer, technical and scientific consultancy, and specialised service provision.

Together with companies, from start-ups to multinationals, universities and research centres, we work on innovations that define the future. Our work makes an important contribution to resolving societal issues.

At PIEP:

- We transform ideas into products, supporting companies from the initial concept stage through to the completion of the product development cycle and subsequent technology transfer.
- We foster strong connections between academia, the scientific community and industry, offering access to a research environment supported by highly qualified human resources.
- We are a young and multidisciplinary organisation providing a broad range of services and solutions. We deliver tailored training programmes designed to meet the specific needs of our members, partners and clients.
- We operate within a collaborative environment where every individual is valued and contributes to collective success. We offer special conditions to our members to promote industry and society towards innovation, sustainability and efficiency.

In 2024, PIEP was recognised by the Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (CITE) for its exemplary practices in promoting equal pay between women and men. This distinction reflects PIEP's commitment to fostering a fair, inclusive, and equitable work environment, where remuneration is determined solely by role, skills, and qualifications, without gender bias (Annex A).

PIEP promotes an organisational culture that does not tolerate any form of harassment or intimidation. To support this, the institution has established a Code of Good Conduct for the Prevention and Combating of Workplace Harassment, which defines guiding principles for employee behaviour.

All PIEP employees, whether working internally or representing the organisation externally, are expected to act in accordance with the company's ethical principles and values, demonstrating responsibility, rigor, and strict respect for human dignity and rights. PIEP values a respectful and dignified work environment and does not tolerate or accept any form of harassment.

3.2 What moves us

Mission

To be a reference entity in innovation in polymer engineering, contributing to the development of the national industry in the plastics and related sectors, and ensuring an excellent response in the delivery of products and services.

Vision

Consolidate itself as a reference entity for innovation within the national and international productive fabric in the field of product development, business models, systems, services and innovative multisectoral polymer-based solutions, based on the principles of sustainable development and on knowledge and differentiating technologies, seeking to create value on an ongoing basis.

Institutional values

- Knowledge | knowledge-driven
- Innovation | Driven by and for innovation
- Cooperation | The whole is greater than the sum of the parts
- Quality | Quality and continuous improvement are the way to satisfy our customers
- Sustainability | We are sustainable and we contribute to a more sustainable world
- Ethic | We assume respect for others as the basis of our relationships.

Innovation Ecosystem

Given its technological matrix and knowledge, PIEP has skills and installed capacity that allow it to respond to companies' R&D needs and society, through the promotion of development and innovation activities, technology transfer, advanced training, consultancy, and services, as detailed in Figure 1.

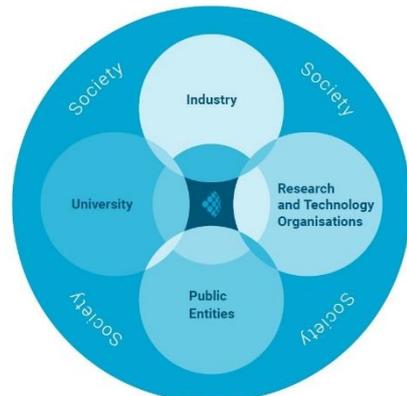


Figure 1. Innovation Ecosystem at PIEP

3.3 Our goal

As a Technological Interface Centre, PIEP promotes strong connections between the academic, scientific, and industrial worlds. Our goal is to “turn ideas into products.” We support companies throughout the entire product development cycle, from the initial concept to technology transfer and market implementation.

We provide access to a research environment supported by highly qualified human resources. We are a young and multidisciplinary organisation, offering a wide range of services and tailored solutions. We also deliver customised training programmes designed to meet the specific needs of our members, partners, and clients.

We operate in a collaborative and welcoming environment, where every individual is valued and contributes to our collective success.

3.4 What we do

Since its inception, PIEP has aimed to “transform ideas into smart and sustainable products”, acting in several vectors where polymer engineering is relevant, namely Product Design and Development; Extrusion, Compounding and Advanced Materials; Advanced Manufacturing Processes; Circular Economy and Environment, Digitalisation, Automation and Advanced Programming; and Tests and Failure Analysis, as detailed in Figure 2.

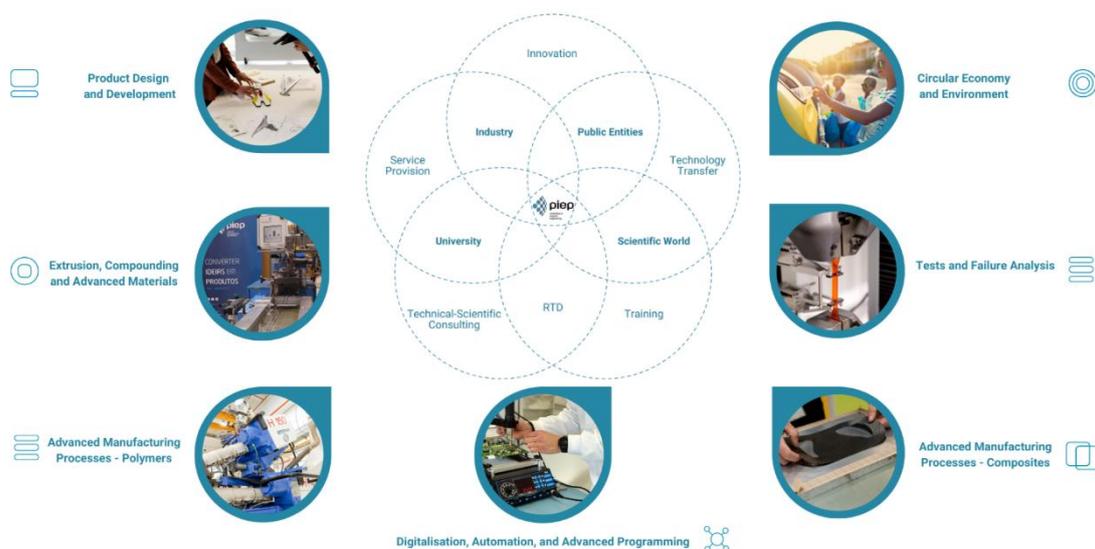


Figure 2. PIEP’s activity areas.

4. Diagnosis

In this report, an assessment regarding gender equality was carried out, with reference to the year 2025.

In 2025, PIEP had 96 employees, being 59% female and 41% male. The number of employees represents an increase of 3% regarding the year before.

Concerning recruitment and selection processes, PIEP remains committed to the principle of equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of gender, selecting the most suitable candidate for each position. Specifically, a total of 12 employees were recruited in 2025, comprising 6 women and 6 men, reflecting a balanced distribution between genders. This outcome reinforces the institution’s commitment to ensuring equal access to employment opportunities. All recruitment processes continue to comply with gender equality principles - for example, through

Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2026

job advertisements addressed to both women and men - ensuring inclusive and non-discriminatory communication practices.

The 96 employees are distributed across 18 occupational groups, with the most representative group being Principal Technicians, comprising a total of 54 employees, as detailed in Figure 3. Of these, 31 are women (57%) and 23 are men (43%).

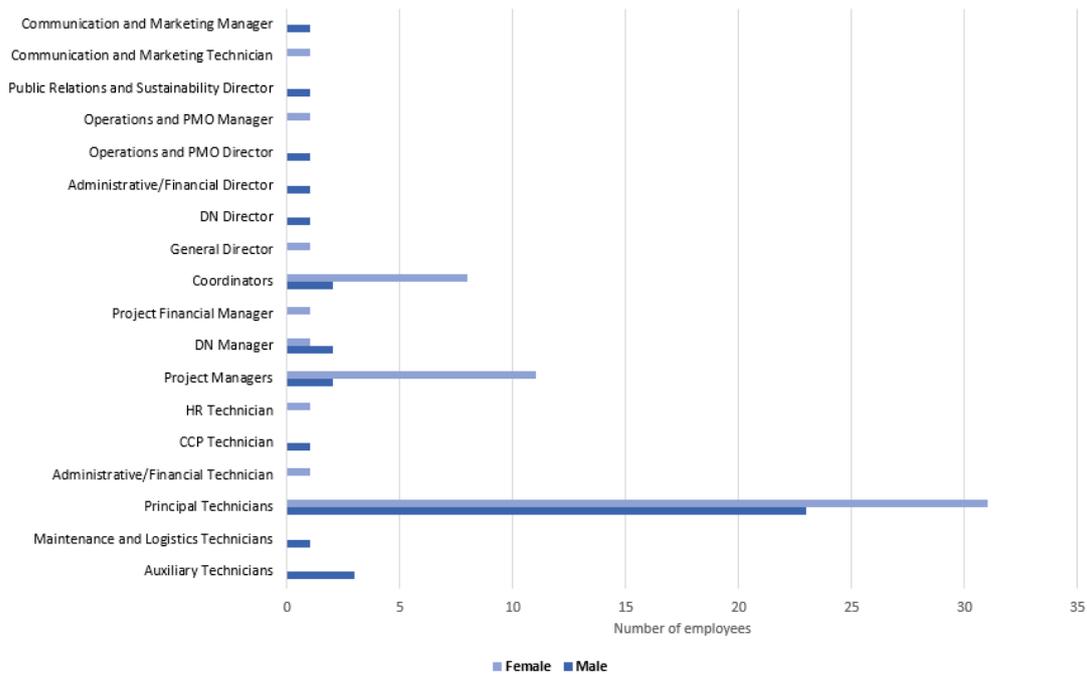


Figure 3. Distribution of employees by job title and gender.

The majority of professionals at PIEP fall within the 25 to 34-year (48 employees) age range, with a significant representation also observed among those aged 45 to 49 years (16 employees). This age distribution reflects a balanced workforce, combining early-career talent with experienced professionals, which supports both innovation and continuity within the organisation, as detailed in Figure 4.

Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2026

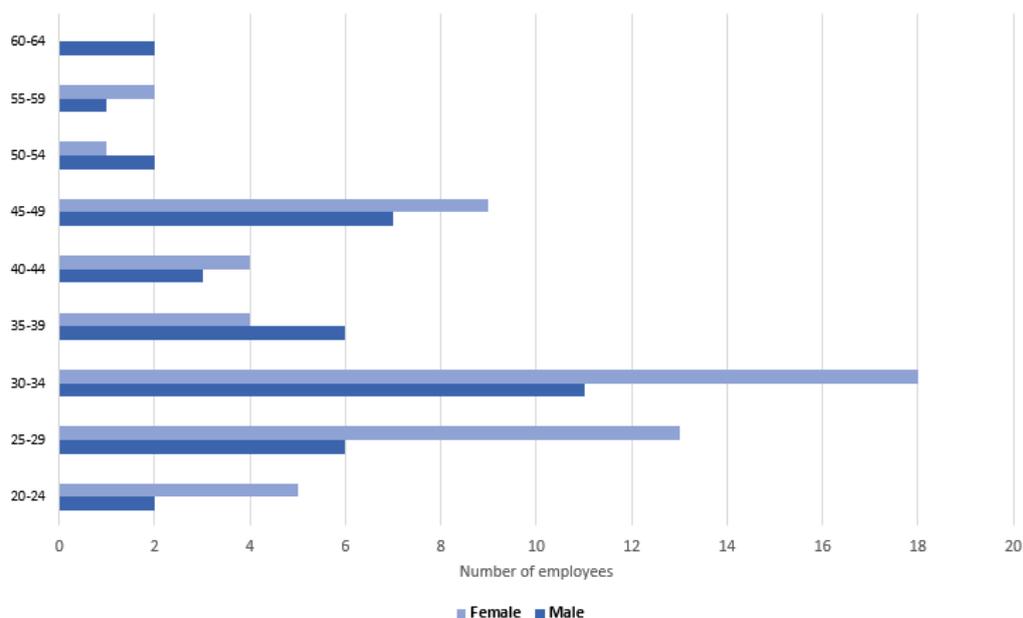


Figure 4. Number of employees by age group.

It is noteworthy that 96% of our employees are considered highly qualified. In this context, high qualification refers to employees holding a Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD degree. Of the total workforce, 50 employees (52%) hold a Master's degree, 28 (29%) hold a Bachelor's degree, and 14 (15%) hold a PhD. The remaining four employees (4%), all male, have completed secondary education, as detailed in Figure 5. When this information is analysed by gender, women represent the majority among highly qualified employees. Specifically, 11 women hold a PhD degree (approximately 79% of all PhD holders), compared to 3 men (21%). At the Master's level, 32 women hold a degree (around 64%), while 18 men represent approximately 36%.

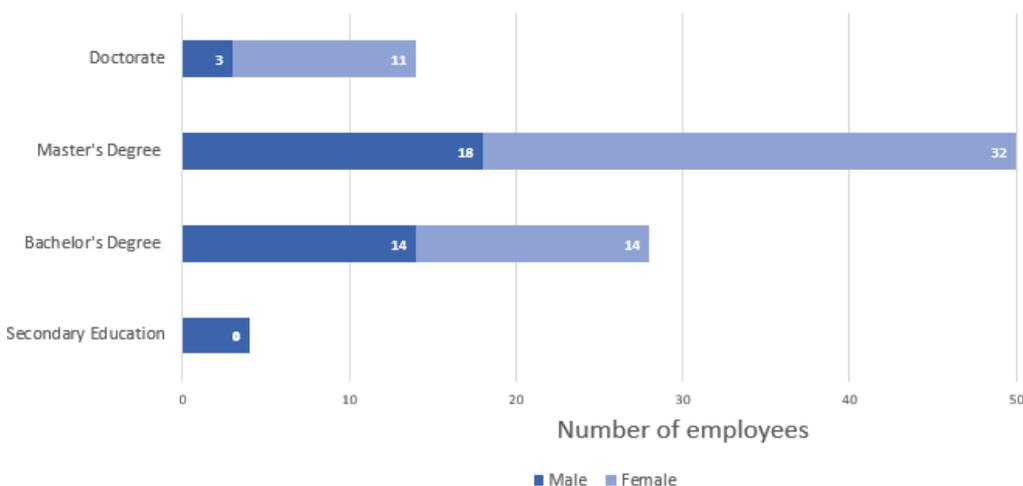


Figure 5. Education level of employees by gender.

This high level of academic qualification is particularly relevant to the institution's capacity for research, innovation, and technical excellence. A workforce with advanced academic training

strengthens scientific rigor, enhances problem-solving capabilities, and supports the development of complex projects, while also contributing to credibility, competitiveness, and alignment with European research and sustainability.

In addition to its highly qualified team, PIEP strongly invests in the continuous training of its employees, contributing to their personal and professional development and ensuring equal access to training opportunities across the organisation, covering all occupational roles. Specifically, in 2025, employees participated in 206 training actions, totalling approximately 3 165 hours, which corresponds to an average of 33 hours of training per employee.

Regarding the working conditions and equal pay, PIEP recognises the performance and dedication of its employees. For this reason, and to foster a positive and productive work environment where employees feel engaged with their roles and encouraged to continuously pursue excellence, PIEP awards employees through an equitable performance evaluation system. Additionally, promotions and salary reviews are conducted based on recognition of service provided, without discrimination based on gender.

Additionally, PIEP also ensures that all employees have the right to parental leave. Leave periods for childcare are provided in accordance with applicable legislation, supporting employees in balancing their professional and family responsibilities. In 2025, one male and four female employees at PIEP took parental leave, demonstrating the institution's commitment to fostering a culture where both men and women are encouraged and able to participate in caregiving responsibilities.

This approach promotes equality, work-life balance, and the well-being of employees and their families.

5. Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for 2026

The GEP serves as an important instrument, enabling PIEP to structure meaningful change and implement a carefully considered set of actions. It reinforces the institution's commitment to gender equality objectives and fostering an inclusive environment.

Supported by a diagnostic analysis of its workforce, PIEP's GEP 2026 is structured around 6 key dimensions, containing specific measures with measurable goals and clearly defined responsibilities, as detailed in Table 1.

Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2026

The internal self-assessment formed the basis for prioritising the most relevant measures, guided by strategic principles relating to gender equality, equal access to opportunities, investment in continuous training, support for parenthood, work–life balance, and the prevention of workplace harassment.

Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2026

Table 1. Strategic actions for Gender Equality (specific objectives, indicators, responsibilities, and status).

Company Strategy				
Action	Objective	Areas involved	Indicator	Status
Highlight the company's commitment in documents and communication channels (e.g., regulations, code of ethics/conduct, etc.)	Communicate (internally and externally) the commitment to promoting gender equality on the company website, via email and internal newsletters	Management, Human Resources, Communication, Circular Economy and Sustainability Dpmt.	% of users who have become aware of the GEP	To be implemented
Disseminate the Equality Plan through awareness sessions and internal communications to employees	Ensure employees are informed about issues related to gender equality	Management, Human Resources	Nº of meetings	To be implemented
Define and monitor strategic gender equality KPIs	Ensure implementation, monitoring, and follow-up of the plan	Management, Human Resources	KPIs	Ongoing
Equality in Access to Employment				
Action	Objective	Areas involved	Indicator	Status
Review all job postings to ensure they do not contain any restrictions, specifications, or preferences based on gender	Guarantee the principle of equality between women and men and non-discrimination in employment access	Human Resources	–	Implemented
Explicitly state principles of gender equal opportunities in selection and recruitment processes	Contribute to a fair and objective recruitment process for women and men	Human Resources	–	Implemented
Initial and Continuous Training				
Action	Objective	Areas involved	Indicator	Status
Include gender equality topics in the training plan to raise awareness among the team	Ensure the training plan promotes gender equality	Human Resources	Nº of training/awareness sessions conducted	To be implemented
Ensure equal opportunities	Promote and ensure equal opportunities between women and men in access to training	Human Resources	Nº of sessions conducted	Ongoing
Parental Protection				
Action	Objective	Areas involved	Indicator	Status
Monitor the return of employees absent for extended parental leave and support their reintegration into the team, providing access to training if needed	Encourage employees to take parental leave	Human Resources	% of target employees recovered	Ongoing
Work-Life Balance				
Action	Objective	Areas involved	Indicator	Status

Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2026

Flexible start times and partial remote work	Promote reconciliation of employees' professional, family, and personal life	Human Resources	–	Ongoing
Prevention of Workplace Harassment				
Action	Objective	Areas involved	Indicator	Status
Code of Good Conduct for the prevention and combating of workplace harassment	Ensure the prevention and combating of workplace harassment	Management, Human Resources	–	Implemented
Internal procedure for reporting and analysing potential harassment situations	Ensure the prevention and combating of workplace harassment	Human Resources	Document	Ongoing
Conduct training/awareness sessions for all employees on the Code of Ethics related to workplace harassment	Ensure the prevention and combating of workplace harassment	Human Resources, Communication Department	Nº of training/awareness sessions conducted	To be implemented

6. Monitoring and Follow-up

The implementation of the GEP is supported by a built-in monitoring and follow-up process, designed to mobilise, engage, and hold accountable the various stakeholders involved. To ensure the effectiveness of the proposed measures, PIEP will establish an internal monitoring mechanism to track progress. This process includes:

- Annual Progress Report: An annual review will be conducted to assess the level of implementation of each measure and the achievement of established targets.
- Data Collection: Continuous collection of gender-disaggregated data to update the institutional diagnosis and identify new trends or needs.
- Management Review: The results of the monitoring process will be presented to the Executive Board to ensure institutional alignment and, if necessary, to adjust the measures according to the evolution of the institution's social and academic reality.

7. Conclusions

This document sets out PIEP's Gender Equality Plan. The plan was developed on the basis of the collection and analysis of quantitative data (statistical data disaggregated by gender). The analysis of these data enabled the establishment of a set of appropriate measures aimed at promoting greater gender equality within the institution.

The plan seeks to address the interdependence of the various dimensions of work, from recruitment - by promoting inclusive communication practices - to fostering a balanced integration of professional and personal life.

For PIEP, gender equality is essential, as it ensures equal rights, freedoms, guarantees, opportunities and recognition for women and men. It contributes to building a culture that attracts talent and promotes both personal and professional development, with a strong emphasis on flexibility, collaboration and the engagement of all. The aim is to recognise excellence and merit, value individuality, and provide an environment of well-being, respect, equal opportunities and productivity for everyone.

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Annex A



A empresa PIEP Associação-Pólo de Inovação em Engenharia de Polímeros, foi distinguida pela Comissão para a Igualdade no Trabalho e no Emprego - CITE, pelas suas boas práticas na promoção da Igualdade Remuneratória entre Mulheres e Homens por trabalho igual ou de igual valor, com o "Selo da Igualdade Salarial" 2024.

14 de novembro de 2024

A Presidente da CITE

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Carla Tavares'.

Carla Tavares



Figure A. 1. Recognition Document – Equal Pay Best Practices (Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment).