

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN (GEP 2024-2025)

Who we are

The Research Centre Hoogstraten (PCH) is located in the north of Antwerp, in the middle of an important horticultural area. The centre plays an active role in the sustainable development of the sector in the area, in Flanders and in Europe. It does so by leading and participating in regional and international project consortia with partners from science, policy, industry, society, sector associations and individual growers. The centre is specialised in performing practice oriented research and testing of innovations and best practices as well as contract research. Knowledge is transferred to growers through demonstration, dissemination of project results, newsletters and publications and by providing professional advice through the centre's independent consultants.

Our commitment to gender equality

PCH upholds a strict policy of non-discrimination based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity, political, religious or sexual preferences during recruitment and on the work floor. It attaches great importance to creating a stimulating work and learning environment, free of intimidation or harassment, and provides equal pay for equal work.

We proudly look back on a long tradition of ensuring equal opportunities and equal treatment for all colleagues, regardless of gender. As a result, we already have a balanced workforce today. With almost a 50/50 ratio of male and female employees, our organisation is a reflection of society. This is something we wish to maintain. Within the Management Team, too, we strive for a (gender) diverse composition.

In addition to diversity, we consider inclusion equally important. Everyone should be able to be themselves within our organisation and have equal opportunities to develop to their full potential.

We believe in transparency and openness, which is why we publish our Gender Equality Plan, which is part of our broader sustainability strategy.

Action plan 2024-2025

Monitoring data

As a company, we work with Acerta for processing payroll data. Through Acerta's dashboard, we have a lot of data available in which a breakdown is made according to gender:

- Gender distribution based on number of employees.
- Gender distribution based on seniority in the organization.
- Gender distribution based on statute worker / employee.

Raising awareness and training colleagues

Knowledge of gender equality and gender neutrality in behaviour and words is limited within our company. We think it is important for us as an organisation to gain more expertise on the topic of gender equality. Therefore, we have set as an objective for 2024-2025 that all employees will receive time to follow a training on "gender equality and how to deal with biases".

The importance of gender equality will also be clearly communicated to all permanent and temporary staff when they start in the organisation.

Equal pay for equal work and a motivating benefits package

Within our organisation, women and men receive equal pay when performing the same job within the same level of experience.

In addition, gender equality is a basic principle in our remuneration policy and applies during the decision-making process of salary evolution. Long periods of absence have an impact on wage evolution. Within our company, we equate gender-related absences such as maternity leave and parental leave with employment, so they have no impact on an employee's salary evolution.

Finally, we attach great importance to a balanced work-life balance. Within our organisation, a significant number of our employees benefit from flexible working hours. Arrangements have also been worked out for occasional and structural teleworking.

Gender equality throughout the recruitment process

Advertisements being written will take gender-neutral wording into account to the maximum extent possible. For this purpose, HR colleagues in charge of writing ads will be supported by the "tips for gender inclusive writing" guide from BOSA, federal government's Policy and Support Service.

Stepstone's "gender bias decoder" will also be used when writing ads.

During selection processes, we try to include both a woman and a man as much as possible. Men and women often have different life experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives. We therefore believe that by involving both genders during the recruitment process, we reduce the likelihood of gender-linked biases and stereotypes emerging. This enables a fairer assessment of candidates.

Measuring violations and acting against gender-based violence and/or gender-based disobedience

Employees faced with violations are encouraged to report internally to their manager or to one of our confidential counsellors who are trained and appointed by the organisation. If this is difficult or if employees prefer to make a report in anonymity, this can also always be done at our external prevention service: Idewe.

Evaluation and reporting

An annual report will be prepared by the HR colleagues and approved by the Management Team.

This report will consist of the collected monitoring data (gender distribution based on number of employees; gender distribution based on seniority in the organization; gender distribution based on statute worker / employee). The follow-up on the progress of the planned actions will be included in the report (participation in training and evaluation of the training, non-biased language in ads for open positions). The report will also include the identified actions for the next period.