

Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Gender Equality Action Plan

EIT Manufacturing

August 2025 | Paris

www.eitmanufacturing.eu

Contents

1.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
2.	BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE	3
2.1.	Underlying legal and policy framework	4
2.2.	Rationale: why change is necessary and needed.....	5
2.3.	Key concepts.....	8
2.4.	EIT Manufacturing's position	10
3.	GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH	11
3.1.	Strengthening the lead role of EIT Manufacturing on gender equality and women's participation in the Manufacturing ecosystem and community.....	11
3.2.	Achieving a gender balanced representation in staff and management and building capacity and raising awareness in the internal organisation	12
3.3.	Education: promote gender equality and women's participation	13
3.4.	Business Creation and Acceleration: promote gender equality and women's participation	14
3.5.	Innovation: promote gender equality and women's participation	15
3.6.	RIS: promote gender equality and women's participation.....	15
4.	ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION	17
4.1.	Monitoring and evaluation.....	18
4.2.	Responsibilities	19
5.	ANNEX 1. STATUS QUO ANALYSIS OF THE EIT MANUFACTURING	22
5.1.	LEADING ROLE OF THE KIC	23
5.2.	GENDER BALANCED REPRESENTATION IN STAFF AND MANAGEMENT, AND INTERNAL CAPACITY AND AWARENESS RAISING.....	24
5.3.	EDUCATION.....	25
5.4.	BUSINESS CREATION AND ACCELERATION	28
5.5.	INNOVATION.....	30
5.6.	RIS	31
6.	ANNEX 2. EIT MANUFACTURING GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2025-2028 (4-YEAR).....	33

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Manufacturing remains a male-dominated industry in Europe and globally. Social, cultural and educational biases underlie the underrepresentation of women, starting from the early age (education) and early years of career. This leads to the unfavourable conjecture, requiring decades to reverse.

EIT Manufacturing acknowledges its responsibility and commitment to contribute to a change in this scenario. This policy addresses GENDER MAINSTREAMING and GENDER ACTION PLAN for all EIT Manufacturing community, in line with the key beliefs and principles underpinning EIT Manufacturing's vision, mission and strategic objectives. The first one outlines a strategic view with a longer-term horizon aimed at achieving gender equality. The goal of the Action Plan is to materialise the policy's commitments into a set of concrete steps and actions to be undertaken and should rely upon sufficient gender data and analysis.

2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Despite significant strides toward gender equality over the past century, women continue to be underrepresented in various sectors of the workforce, notably in engineering. According to Eurostat, in 2023, women made up only 22.4% of scientists and engineers in the EU's manufacturing sector, compared to 45.6% in service-related industries. This disparity underscores a persistent gender gap in technical fields.

The European Commission's *She Figures 2024* report highlights that women represent just 19% of top academic positions in engineering and technology across the EU¹. This underrepresentation extends to innovation, where women account for only 9% of patent applicants, a figure that has remained stagnant over the past decade².

Addressing this gender imbalance is not only a matter of equity but also essential for economic growth and innovation. The European Commission emphasises that increasing women's participation in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields can help alleviate labour shortages and drive competitiveness. Initiatives such as the *Digital Education Action Plan* and *STEM Education Strategic Plan*³ aim to support girls and women in developing digital and entrepreneurial skills, thereby encouraging more inclusive participation in STEM careers⁴.

¹ European Commission (2024). [She Figures 2024](#)

² Ibid.

³ European Commission. (2025). [A STEM Education Strategic Plan: Skills for competitiveness and innovation \(COM\(2025\) 89 final\)](#).

⁴ European Commission (2020) [Digital Education Action Plan](#)

2.1. Underlying legal and policy framework

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union (EU) and is enshrined in its legal and policy frameworks. It is also a core element of the *European Commission Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025*⁵ which outlines a unified approach to achieving equality across all EU policies and sectors, including innovation and technology.

The EU has established a comprehensive regulatory foundation supporting gender equality, including binding directives that span the broader labour market and specifically apply to innovation and research ecosystems. Within the *Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation*, gender equality is defined as a cross-cutting priority. The programme strengthens gender mainstreaming measures by requiring the integration of the gender dimension into research and innovation content, and by making Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) a prerequisite for participation by public bodies, higher education institutions, and research organisations⁶. Horizon Europe also earmarks dedicated funding for gender and intersectional research, innovation and technology, to support inclusive gender equality policy development under the renewed European Research Area⁶. These efforts aim to foster gender-equal work environments and to enhance the quality, relevance, and societal impact of research, as well as of the technologies and innovations produced.

As an EU body and an integral part of Horizon Europe, the EIT plays a critical role in advancing the Union's gender equality agenda. The EIT contributes to sustainable economic growth and job creation by empowering innovators and entrepreneurs across Europe. Gender equality is therefore a key component of all EIT-supported activities, including those of the EIT Headquarters (HQ) and its network of EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs).

In 2020, the EIT adopted the *EIT Gender Equality Policy*⁷, setting the overarching goals: 1) Strengthening the role of the EIT in the European innovation landscape in promoting gender equality, and 2) Ensuring gender equality at the EIT, including gender balanced representation in EIT staff and management. The EIT Gender Equality Policy and its overarching objectives are applicable to the HQ, the KICs and EIT Alumni. Building on this foundation, the EIT has taken meaningful steps to institutionalise gender equality across its operations. By 2022, all KICs had initiated the development of gender mainstreaming plans. The EIT also delivers regular gender equality training to staff and ensures that gender-sensitive planning, implementation, and monitoring are embedded in its work programmes and budgets.

⁵ European Commission (2020) [A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#)

⁶ European Commission (2021) [Gender equality: a strengthened commitment in Horizon Europe](#)

⁷ EIT (2022) [EIT Gender Equality Policy 2022-2027](#)

2.2. Rationale: why change is necessary and needed⁸

There are many benefits to promoting gender equality in innovation and technology, which can help build the case for gender equality policies. It is widely acknowledged that promoting gender equality in organisations brings a positive impact with respect to: well-being at work, compliance with domestic and EU regulations, attracting and retaining talents, economic benefits, excellence and quality, effectiveness and efficiency of innovations and technology and as a leverage for organisational change.

Creating better work environments

The EIT KICs are work environments in which all staff should be able to develop their skills freely and fulfil their expectations. Since these work environments are made up of women and men, adopting a gender sensitive perspective in this regard is sensible. Beyond compliance with existing rules, preventing verbal, psychological and physical gender-based violence and offences is a basic requirement for a safe, gender-friendly work environment.

Enabling work-life balance in the organisation, distribution and planning of work brings benefits for all genders. These benefits are relevant both to the individuals, in terms of well-being and motivation, and to the organisation, in terms of effectiveness. Besides, better work environments contribute to retaining and attracting talent. They are part of a more sustainable management of human resources.

Attracting and retaining talent

Increasing Europe's ability to innovate relies on human capital. Finding and training qualified and creative people is costly and bringing them up to their full potential takes time. As business, education and research organisations are involved in an intense competition for talent, it is necessary to address the full pool of talent.

It also requires retaining staff over time and giving them the opportunity to achieve their personal and professional objectives and potential. It has been shown that women encounter barriers that keep them in lower positions in the hierarchy and act against their access to top decision-making and managerial positions in an organisation (so-called "sticky floor" and "glass ceiling" phenomena). This can lead to a "leaky pipeline" where women are more likely to abandon their career in an organisation and has a considerable impact: a loss of knowledge, an organisational cost and a reduced and limited perspective in the organisation. Attracting and retaining female staff in a knowledge-based economy can only be reached if the full spectrum of gender bias and inequalities is addressed.

⁸ This section is based on [EIGE \(2016\) Gender Equality in Academia and Research. GEAR Tool](#) and adapted to fit the reality and context of the EIT KICs.

Economic benefits

The business case for gender equality, diversity and inclusion is strong and growing stronger. Evidence points to companies being more successful if they are able to harness the innovation and creativity of women. As evidenced by multiple recent studies⁹, women's upwards advancement in the private sector brings benefits in terms of business economic results, as companies with higher gender diversity (composition of top management and boards) are more likely to have higher financial returns compared to national industry medians in their sector.

While social justice, legal compliance, or maintaining industry standard employee environment protocols are typically the initial impetus, many successful companies regard gender and diversity as a source of competitive advantage and specifically as a key enabler of growth⁹.

Excellence and quality

The quest for excellence and quality has become a major issue for business, education and research organisations. It is driven by an intense competition for skills, funding and innovations. Bringing a gender dimension to innovation and technology improves the overall quality of design, protocols and outputs in a wide variety of fields.

As innovation and technology are increasingly framed as working for/with society, reflecting the diversity of final users from the early research stage has become an absolute must.

'Gender blindness' (understood as the lack of consideration for gender-related aspects) often goes with neglecting other relevant social or experiential parameters. Challenging this blindness, on the contrary, creates awareness for a broader set of variables than the sole sex and/or gender.

While 'excellence' is often cited as the reason to resist gendering business, education and research organisations, in reality, it is the other way round: taking into account the gender dimension is vital for the (societal) relevance and quality of innovation and technology. Integrating sex and gender-based analysis is a matter of producing excellent innovations and technology to the benefit of all European citizens¹⁰.

⁹ McKinsey & Company (2018) [Delivering through Diversity](#); McKinsey & Company (2015) [Diversity Matters](#)

¹⁰ European Commission (2020) [Gendered Innovations 2: How Inclusive Analysis Contributes to Research and Innovation](#)

Effectiveness and efficiency

Ensuring diversity in working teams (in terms of gender, race, nationality, age, etc.) helps create an inclusive organisation, which improves its reputation, and contributes to retaining and attracting (new) talent.

Along these lines, building gender diverse teams helps to secure a broader set of viewpoints, contributing to enhanced creativity and innovation – and thus also enhances the quality of innovation and technology. Such teams promote inclusiveness, experiment more and share and create knowledge.

In addition, gender balanced teams tend to perform better and exhibit superior dynamics and productivity.

Compliance with domestic and EU regulations

All KICs are bound to respect legal obligations related to discrimination and gender equality. Even if these may vary across countries, there is a cost for breaching existing regulations. This cost can consist of fines, legal prosecutions and liability, damaged reputation, loss of attractiveness, or internal conflicts.

Complying with the rules requires resources and know-how, which are often more easily secured when a gender mainstreaming policy is in place. Investing in gender equality (for instance, by collecting sex-disaggregated data or establishing monitoring instruments) helps organisations to comply with legal provisions more comprehensively and proactively.

A leverage for organisational change

The changes needed to achieve gender equality also bring benefits in terms of transparency and accountability, decision-making, career management and evaluation procedures. These benefit all staff as well as the organisation as a whole. Last but not least, addressing gender (in)equality can be part of a broader strategic process aimed at enhancing the competitive edge and (inter)national profile.



Figure 1. Rationale: why change is necessary and needed. Source: [EIGE \(2016\) Gender Equality in Academia and Research. GEAR Tool](#), adapted to fit the reality and context of the EIT KICs.

2.3. Key concepts

Gender mainstreaming

Gender Mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated into all policies at all levels and all stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for all genders of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make the concerns and experiences of all employees – irrespective of gender – an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that all genders benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming is a complementary strategy and not a substitute for targeted, women-centred policies and programmes, gender equality legislation, institutional mechanisms for gender equality and specific interventions that aim to close the gender gap¹¹.

¹¹ [EIGE \(2021\) Gender Equality Glossary & Thesaurus](#)

Gender balance

In a scenario of gender equality, all genders are expected to participate proportionally to their share of the population. In many areas, however, women participate less than what would be expected based on the sex distribution in the population (underrepresentation of women), while men participate more than expected (overrepresentation of men)¹².

Gender equality

Equality does not mean that all genders will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender identity or which gender they were assigned at birth. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of all genders, not just women and men, are taken into consideration, thereby recognising the diversity of different groups. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage all genders. Equality between genders is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development¹³.

Gender Equality Action Plan or Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

With the introduction/start of Horizon Europe, the European Commission made gender equality plans (GEPs) a basic requirement for participation in its research framework programme. It defined GEPs as:

“a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through a process of structural change”.

This policy instrument strives to sustainably transform organisational processes, cultures and structures within the field of research and innovation (R & I) to combat and reduce gender imbalances and inequalities. It should be holistic and comprehensive in the way that it addresses the whole organisation, engages all relevant stakeholders and tackles several gender equality issues in your organisation. Therefore, GEPs should not focus only on promoting career opportunities and equal access to resources for one gender; rather, they should be inclusive and target women and men in all their diversity.

Consequently, a GEP is a systematic and strategic instrument that establishes priorities and concrete objectives (based on a thorough status quo assessment), and the specific measures that will be implemented to improve gender equality within organisations and in the field of R & I¹⁴.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ [EIGE \(2016\) Gender Equality in Academia and Research. GEAR Tool, “What is a Gender Equality Plan”.](#)

Gender gap

Gap in any area between women and men in terms of their levels of participation, access, rights, remuneration or benefits.

Gender parity

Gender parity concerns relative equality in terms of numbers and proportions of women and men, girls and boys, and is often calculated as the ratio of female-to-male values for a given indicator¹⁵.

Intersectionality

Analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination¹⁶.

2.4. EIT Manufacturing's position

EIT Manufacturing aims to be a leading role model for the European manufacturing sector, demonstrating how innovation and competitiveness can be driven by gender equality, inclusion and diversity.

Our team proudly brings together individuals from over 30 nationalities, representing a broad range of cultural perspectives, experiences and professional backgrounds. As of the latest data, women represent 61% of the EIT Manufacturing staff and 43% of management roles. These figures are encouraging but not sufficient; we remain committed to continuous improvement and accountability in all areas of gender and diversity performance.

EIT Manufacturing promotes equal participation of all genders at all organisational levels and is dedicated to cultivating a work culture and environment that allow individuals –regardless of gender– to thrive professionally, access the same opportunities, and enjoy equally fulfilling career paths. This effort involves proactive policies, inclusive leadership, and ongoing training and awareness to challenge unconscious bias and structural inequalities.

The **Status Quo Analysis** (Annex 1) provides a comprehensive picture of where EIT Manufacturing currently stands in terms of gender representation, policies, and practices. It serves as a foundational assessment for both this Gender Mainstreaming Policy and the accompanying **Gender Equality Action Plan** (Annex 2), ensuring that all interventions are data-driven and context-aware.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ [EIGE \(2021\) Gender Equality Glossary & Thesaurus](#)

3. GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

As an EIT KIC, EIT Manufacturing is fully aligned with the overarching goals set forth in the **EIT Gender Equality Policy 2022-2027**, particularly: 1) Strengthening the EIT's role in promoting gender equality, women's entrepreneurship, and leadership in the European innovation landscape, and 2) Achieving gender equality within the EIT, including gender balance at all levels among EIT staff.

In this context, EIT Manufacturing is committed to fostering gender equality across its three core pillars: **innovation**, **education**, and **business creation**. Our overarching gender equality goals are:

- To cultivate a **gender-responsive portfolio of supported projects**, encompassing education programmes, entrepreneurship support, and innovation activities that are inclusive by design and implementation;
- To ensure **gender-balanced representation** in staffing, leadership, and decision-making roles, thereby reinforcing diverse perspectives in strategic planning and execution.

Building on these overarching goals, we now present six specific objectives that will drive our actions towards achieving gender equality.

3.1. Strengthening the lead role of EIT Manufacturing on gender equality and women's participation in the Manufacturing ecosystem and community

EIT Manufacturing is committed to strengthening its leadership role in the European manufacturing innovation ecosystem by setting high standards for excellence, inclusion and gender equality. As part of this mission, the KIC integrates gender mainstreaming across all external and internal activities, ensuring that gender perspectives are systematically considered in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects, partnerships and policy contributions. By championing inclusive innovation, EIT Manufacturing not only fosters collaboration among industry, academia and research but also promotes gender-balanced participation in all community-facing initiatives. Staff and department heads are equipped to represent these values externally, acting as ambassadors for gender-aware leadership. Through this approach, EIT Manufacturing positions itself as a role model in driving both industrial and societal transformation that is equitable, diverse and future-ready.

The main actions planned to achieve this objective are (see Gender Equality Action Plan in Annex 2 for the full set of actions):

- **☑Increase visibility of women innovators and entrepreneurs** by ensuring representation in public events, innovation showcases, and external communications, and by promoting success stories from women-led or gender-balanced projects.
- **Lead communication efforts to raise awareness on gender equality in manufacturing**, including organizing high-visibility events, campaigns, and thought leadership content that spotlight women innovators, inclusive technologies, and gender-balanced teams across the EIT Manufacturing community.
- **☑Strengthen strategic partnerships and networks for gender equality**, including collaboration with EU-wide initiatives (e.g., Supernovas), industry alliances, and educational institutions to foster a more inclusive manufacturing ecosystem.

3.2. Achieving a gender balanced representation in staff and management and building capacity and raising awareness in the internal organisation

EIT Manufacturing is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive working environment, with a particular focus on achieving gender-balanced representation across all levels of the organisation. This commitment is embedded in our human resources policies, which promote equal opportunities in recruitment, career development and leadership pathways. Concrete measures include gender-sensitive job descriptions, targeted outreach and mentorship programmes, unconscious bias training and transparent monitoring of gender-related indicators. By actively addressing structural and cultural barriers, EIT Manufacturing aims to create a workplace where talent thrives regardless of gender, reinforcing innovation and excellence across the community. Parallel to that, EIT Manufacturing recognises that building internal capacity and fostering awareness are essential to driving long-term organisational impact and cultural change. To this end, we implement continuous learning initiatives and internal communication strategies that equip staff with the knowledge, skills and mindset needed to advance our mission and values. All department heads are trained to act as ambassadors of EIT Manufacturing's principles, promoting a respectful, inclusive and accountable workplace culture. Regular training sessions, workshops and knowledge-sharing formats are held on key topics such as innovation, sustainability, gender equality and inclusion. Furthermore, EIT Manufacturing maintains a zero-tolerance approach to any form of misconduct. If and when inappropriate behaviour occurs, the organisation is both willing and prepared to take action in line with our internal policies and values.

The main actions planned to achieve this objective are (see Gender Equality Action Plan in Annex 2 for the full set of actions):

- **Set gender parity targets** for recruitment and promotion processes, ensuring that representation of either women or men does not fall below 40% at all organisational levels.
- **Review and adapt recruitment and selection processes** to ensure inclusivity, including the use of gender-neutral language in job descriptions, diverse and gender-balanced hiring panels, and inclusive outreach strategies.
- **Deliver mandatory annual training sessions** on gender equality, unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, and gender-sensitive innovation for all staff, tailored to roles and responsibilities.

3.3. Education: promote gender equality and women's participation

EIT Manufacturing places gender equality at the core of its educational strategy, embedding it across the design, delivery and evaluation of all learning activities. Our aim is to create inclusive environments where women are empowered to engage, contribute and lead in the manufacturing sector. All education-related calls for proposals require applicants to incorporate gender-related measures and gender balance is a formal criterion during the evaluation process. Evaluation panels are composed with attention to gender diversity to ensure a wide range of perspectives in decision-making. We address the underrepresentation of women in STEM and manufacturing through tailored programmes, including targeted training, coaching and scholarships to remove financial barriers and support participation. In our academic programmes, gender balance is also a factor during student selection. A mandatory threshold must ensure that a minimum of 40% of participants and graduates in all supported programmes are women (minimum 40% women and men in the EIT KICs – labelled education, and non-labelled programmes and trainings [KPI EITHE07.4], [KPI EITHE07.5], [KPI EITHE08.1]). This requirement is applied across all funded projects to guarantee balanced representation. To further drive change, we recognise and reward projects that actively promote gender equality. Prizes are awarded to teams demonstrating impactful actions supporting women's engagement and leadership in manufacturing. These practices not only showcase best-in-class examples but also incentivise others to adopt inclusive approaches.

The main actions planned to achieve this objective are (see Gender Equality Action Plan in Annex 2 for the full set of actions):

- **Promote gender-sensitive financial support schemes**, including scholarships, reduced fees for women, and awareness campaigns that highlight available opportunities.
- **Ensure gender is mainstreamed in all education-related calls for proposals**, including requirements for gender equality plans, mixed-gender teams, and inclusive leadership structures within applicant consortia.

- **Support and scale dedicated programmes** that are designed to engage women in manufacturing education.
- **Encourage female participation in startups** emerging from EIT-labelled education programmes and track the creation and leadership of female-led ventures.
- **Monitor and report on gender-disaggregated data** in all education proposals and funded activities, including participation rates, graduation outcomes, and startup involvement.
- **Track the post-graduation employment and career progression** of female learners to assess the long-term impact of EIT Manufacturing education programmes on reducing skill gaps and increasing female participation in the EU manufacturing workforce.

3.4. Business Creation and Acceleration: promote gender equality and women's participation

Despite women making up nearly half of the global workforce, they remain significantly underrepresented in manufacturing leadership and entrepreneurship. EIT Manufacturing is actively working to change that by creating targeted opportunities for women to launch and grow ventures that bring cutting-edge technologies and sustainable solutions to industry.

Our initiatives are grounded in data and driven by impact. We encourage applications from female-led startups and scaleups, put special emphasis on investment cases from female entrepreneurs in the evaluation process and track gender-related metrics across our entrepreneurship portfolio—including the proportion of female founders, CEOs and teams. We also ensure gender balance in evaluation panels and the Investment Committee structure for startup funding and design programmes, equipping women with the business skills needed to thrive in advanced manufacturing.

In alignment with the EIT Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2025-2027, EIT Manufacturing aims to ensure a gender-smart approach to investment, with the result that 35% of the EIT KIC supported startups and scaleups are expected to have a woman CEO/Owner by 2027 [KPI EITHE03.1/gender].

The main actions planned to achieve this objective are (see Gender Equality Action Plan in Annex 2 for the full set of actions):

- **Promote female entrepreneurship, self-employment, and startup creation** among female students, researchers, and consortia members.
- **Attract, support, and fund female-led startups and businesses** by integrating gender-sensitive criteria into call evaluations, encouraging applications from women entrepreneurs, and offering tailored business development support.

- **Encourage and promote fundraising activities** for female-led startups and scaleups, including investor matchmaking, pitch events, and access to EIT Manufacturing's investment instruments with gender-aware investment committee oversight.

3.5. Innovation: promote gender equality and women's participation

Conscious of the underrepresentation of women in the manufacturing sector, EIT Manufacturing is committed to addressing the gender gap issue in the deployment of its innovation programmes from different perspectives. The first aspect relates to the Calls for Proposals (CfP) processes that integrate the gender dimension in multiple ways. To start, all proposals are expected to provide information about gender equality plans in place in the applying consortia and describe how the gender dimension will be incorporated in the design and implementation of the projects. Gender diversity considerations are also part of the evaluation criteria and the KIC is making its best efforts to ensure that women are represented in all evaluation panels, with the goal of 50% representation in all panels by the end of 2026. The second aspect relates to the types of projects funded. Human centricity in manufacturing is one of our strategic objectives. The budget is always dedicated to projects addressing this objective. In many cases, the solutions are providing means to reduce the gender gap on the shopfloor that historically was linked to the physical difficulty of a number of manufacturing tasks. Technologies like exoskeletons, cobots and automation are *de facto* making those considerations irrelevant. Finally, EIT Manufacturing is monitoring the number of innovation consortia led by women, as well as the number of women-led business, with the objective of increasing the ratios over time. In line with the EIT Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2025-2027, EIT Manufacturing aims to ensure that 30% of EIT KIC startups created off/for innovation have a female CEO/Owner [KPI EITHE04.1/gender] by December 2027.

The main actions planned to achieve this objective are (see Gender Equality Action Plan in Annex 2 for the full set of actions):

- **Launch dedicated marketing campaigns** to actively attract female innovators to apply to EIT Manufacturing's innovation calls.
- **Include a focus on gender equality in all innovation-related Calls for Proposals**, requiring applicants to detail their gender equality plans and how gender will be addressed in the design, implementation, and outcomes of proposed projects.
- **Ensure gender parity on all evaluation panels**, with the objective of reaching 50% representation of women in proposal evaluation and review processes.

3.6. RIS: promote gender equality and women's participation

EIT Manufacturing is taking decisive steps to promote gender equality, particularly in the Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) countries. Recognising the persistent gender imbalance in the manufacturing sector, EIT Manufacturing has committed to implementing targeted actions over the next three years to support women's

participation, leadership, and advancement in innovation ecosystems across RIS regions. Through tailored programmes, inclusive policies, mentorship opportunities, and strategic partnerships with local stakeholders, the organization aims to break down systemic barriers and foster a more inclusive and equitable industrial landscape. This initiative not only addresses social responsibility but also enhances innovation potential by tapping into the full spectrum of talent available in RIS countries.

The main actions planned to achieve this objective are (see Gender Equality Action Plan in Annex 2 for the full set of actions):

- **Foster inclusive innovation ecosystems** by supporting initiatives that empower women in manufacturing, entrepreneurship, and technology across RIS regions.
- **Promote equal access to education and upskilling** through training programmes and outreach activities that encourage women's participation in STEM and industrial sectors.
- **Support female leadership and representation** by enabling mentorship, networking, and visibility opportunities for women in industry and research.
- **Embed gender equality in policy and practice** by incorporating diversity criteria into project selection, collecting gender-disaggregated data, and engaging local stakeholders to drive systemic change.

4. ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

To put the Gender Mainstreaming Policy into practice, EIT Manufacturing has developed and adopted a four-year Gender Equality Action Plan (GEP) for the period 2025-2028. The GEP aims to embed gender mainstreaming across all levels of the organisation's operations and management.

The development of the GEP followed a structured approach aligned with four key phases:

- **Define:** A comprehensive status quo analysis of the EIT Manufacturing Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) (Annex 1) was conducted, serving as a diagnostic and impact assessment to identify gender bias and establish a baseline. This included collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data across all organisational levels – from staff to leadership and governance bodies, as well as within EIT Manufacturing portfolio activities.
- **Plan:** Based on this analysis, specific objectives, targets, and measures were set to address identified gaps (Annex 2). Clear responsibilities and resources were allocated, and efforts were made to ensure broad institutional support.
- **Act:** EIT Manufacturing is now in the implementation phase, gradually rolling out actions while promoting engagement across the organisation.
- **Check:** Progress will be systematically monitored and evaluated, allowing for continuous improvement and refinement of the GEP.

This iterative and structured methodology ensures that the GEP remains effective, relevant, and responsive to the evolving needs of the organisation and its broader innovation ecosystem.

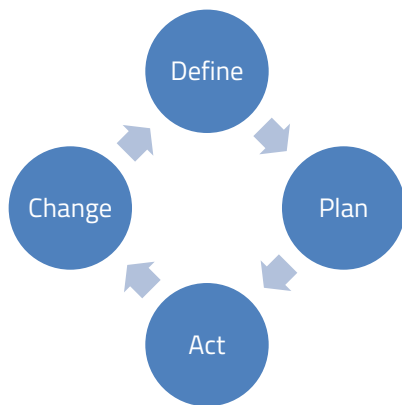


Figure 2. Gender mainstreaming cycle. Source: [EIGE \(2016\) Gender Mainstreaming Cycle](#).

The following subsections of this document outline the monitoring mechanisms and assigned responsibilities that support the implementation (*Act*) and the ongoing evaluation (*Check*) of the plan, as part of the broader organisational arrangements.

4.1. Monitoring and evaluation

Addressing the six objectives of the GEP through targeted operational and technical measures requires the integration of robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Embedding these approaches into the GEP and its supporting structures ensures that progress is continuously tracked, deviations are addressed and outcomes are assessed in an iterative and evidence-based manner.

The GEP sets out clear objectives, accompanied by defined indicators of success, accountable stakeholders and timelines for implementation. Each action under the GEP is planned with measurable and quantifiable outcomes in mind, supported by strong internal ownership and aligned with EIT Manufacturing's governance structures.

Implementation of the GEP will be supported by the appointment of a Gender Mainstreaming task force, that will include one person from HR and one person from each thematic area to ensure effective execution and monitoring. A dedicated working group has contributed to the development of this Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan and will continue to support its ongoing implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation will take place continuously. The Gender Mainstreaming task force will assess progress on actions under each of the six objectives every year. This regular review cycle will ensure adherence to timelines and key performance indicators and enable timely interventions where needed.

A brief on the implementation progress will be submitted annually to the EIT Manufacturing Management Team, allowing for strategic overview and responsive adjustments. In addition, the KPI data from the Status Quo Analysis (Annex 1) will be reviewed annually in line with EIT Manufacturing’s operational and performance reporting periods (2025-2028). Updates to this data will inform discussions within the task force and Management Team, helping to refine and adapt GEP measures where necessary.

EIT Manufacturing will also report to the EIT on specific gender-related deliverables, including the "Strategies and actions implemented to ensure gender balance in EITM - 2024" (or equivalent deliverable in the new Business Plan 2026-2028). Reporting will also cover the percentage of KIC staff, disaggregated by level and gender, trained on gender equality. This reporting mechanism adds an additional layer of accountability, ensuring gender mainstreaming across all EIT Manufacturing’s operations, programmes and regional outreach efforts. Finally, public retrospective reports on the GEP will be published at two key milestones: a mid-term review at the end of 2026 and a final implementation report at the end of 2028. These reviews will evaluate the plan’s impact and inform the development of the subsequent GEP cycle, ensuring continued improvement and alignment with EIT Manufacturing’s strategic priorities.

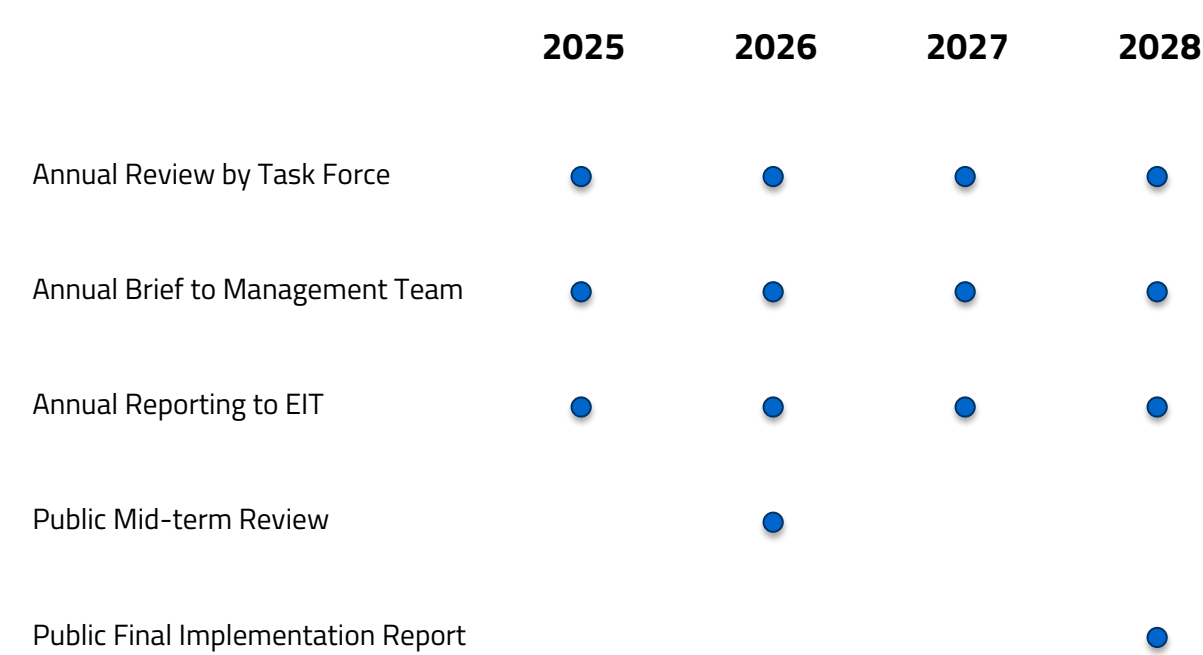


Figure 3. Gender Equality Action Plan Milestones (2025-2028). Source: EIT Manufacturing.

4.2. Responsibilities

Successful implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEP) at EIT Manufacturing requires consistent and active

:

participation from the team across all levels of the organisation. This includes establishing effective linkages across departments and functional units, ensuring everyone understands their role in delivering the GEP and fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing and regular communication regarding progress and best practices.

Leadership plays a central role in supporting the Gender Mainstreaming task force to advocate for the GEP and its objectives. At the same time, all team members are encouraged to uphold and promote the values of gender equality in their daily work, contributing to an inclusive and equitable work environment.

The following outlines the roles and responsibilities of various levels of the organisation in supporting the implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and GEP.

The role of the **Gender Mainstreaming Task Force**:

- Act as a liaison between the EIT Manufacturing Management Team and thematic areas.
- Ensure that gender mainstreaming is embedded into all operational and strategic processes.
- Monitor progress, including reviewing KPI metrics, drafting progress reports, etc.

The role of the **EIT Manufacturing Supervisory Board**:

- Provide high-level oversight and public support for implementing gender equality within EIT Manufacturing's governance structures.
- Ensure appropriate escalation routes are in place for non-compliance with governance principles related to gender equality.

The role of the **EIT Manufacturing Management Team**:

- Provide oversight and public commitment to the implementation of GEP provisions, including integration within EIT Manufacturing's overall governance and operations.
- Nominate and appoint the Gender Mainstreaming task force.
- Approve GEP actions and take responsibility for the execution of planned measures, including integration into recruitment and HR policies.
- Monitor progress on GEP objectives in collaboration with the Gender Mainstreaming task force.
- Revise the Gender Mainstreaming Policy to ensure it remains relevant and effective.
- Allocate necessary human and financial resources for GEP implementation.
- Maintain escalation routes for cases of non-compliance with GEP provisions, organisational values, misconduct, bias, or discrimination.

The role of **EIT Manufacturing managers**:

- Lead by example and act as visible champions of gender equality within their teams.
- Monitor day-to-day implementation of the GEP within their areas of work.
- Collect and report data to support the tracking of GEP indicators.
- Identify and offer opportunities for staff to engage in gender mainstreaming activities or become ambassadors.
- Complete gender equality training and encourage their teams to do the same.
- Promote a psychologically safe work environment for all staff.
- Follow established HR, recruitment and operational policies, and ensure mechanisms are in place for reporting and addressing non-compliance.

The role of **non-managerial staff, including operational and technical teams**:

- Promote and apply the GEP and Gender Mainstreaming Policy in daily work and interactions.
- Reflect on how individual behaviours and contributions affect gender dynamics and inclusion.
- Contribute data and feedback from their areas of work to support monitoring of GEP indicators.
- Develop and suggest operational approaches that reduce gender bias and foster equality.
- Participate in gender equality training.
- Share feedback and suggestions to support continuous improvement and alignment of the GEP with on-the-ground realities.

5. ANNEX 1. STATUS QUO ANALYSIS OF THE EIT MANUFACTURING

This annex provides a baseline assessment of gender equality within the EIT Manufacturing Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC), forming a foundational element of the *Define* phase in the development of the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEP). The purpose of this analysis is to establish a clear understanding of the current situation in terms of gender representation, organisational culture, and equality-promoting measures, and to identify where further efforts are needed.

The analysis examines both structural and activity-based dimensions of the organisation. This includes human resources policies and practices, staff composition at different organisational levels, and gender mainstreaming efforts across EIT Manufacturing's programme portfolio – such as education, innovation, business creation, and RIS. Wherever possible, sex-disaggregated data has been used to map representation, participation, and access to opportunities.

This diagnostic not only highlights good practices already in place but also uncovers systemic gaps and areas where improvements could make a tangible difference. EIT Manufacturing already demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusive practices, and the organisation is well-positioned to advance toward more equitable outcomes. However, this analysis also recognises the limitations posed by incomplete or inconsistent data in certain areas. These gaps underline the need to strengthen monitoring mechanisms and ensure more systematic collection and reporting moving forward.

Importantly, the status quo analysis serves as a strategic learning exercise. It informs the design of targeted GEP actions and offers a clear reference point for measuring progress over time. By identifying where EIT Manufacturing stands today, the organisation can more effectively plan where it wants to go – and how to get there – as a leader in fostering gender equality in innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship.

The analysis was carried out by a cross-functional internal working group composed of staff members from various units and levels of seniority.

Following the best practice shared among the EIT and its KICs, and drawing on the outlines of the Gender Mainstreaming Policy, six thematic areas have been defined for detailed analysis, which align with the objectives defined for the Gender Mainstreaming Policy:

1. Strengthening the leading role of the KIC in the community.
2. Achieving a gender balanced representation in staff and management, and building capacity and raising awareness in the internal organisation.
3. Promoting gender equality and women's participation in education.
4. Promoting gender equality and women's participation in business creation and acceleration.
5. Promoting gender equality and women's participation in innovation.
6. Promoting gender equality and women's participation in EIT RIS.

The following sections present the result of the status quo analysis, offering an in-depth examination of organisational and operational structures, along with KPI data from the 2020-2024 activity portfolio.

5.1. LEADING ROLE OF THE KIC

EIT Manufacturing has taken concrete and strategic steps toward embedding gender equality across its internal operations and external engagements, in line with its commitment to act as a leader in promoting gender-aware leadership and inclusive participation in the European manufacturing ecosystem.

In the past years, EIT Manufacturing strengthened its organizational commitment to gender equality by updating and implementing key policies. More specifically, EIT Manufacturing rolled out its updated *Diversity & Inclusion Policy* in 2022, along with its dedicated *Grievance Policy*, and made these available to staff internally on the EIT Manufacturing HR SharePoint. At the same time, the *Recruitment Policy* was reviewed and updated to reflect best practices in fair and gender-sensitive hiring. All our job descriptions contain and promote gender equality as an area of responsibility.

To support internal culture change and external awareness, EIT Manufacturing developed two platforms in 2022 – AGORA (a secure platform for manufacturing stakeholders across Europe to connect) and EIT Manufacturing Academy (educational platform) to disseminate, to raise awareness and educate internally, as well as externally. Special modules will be developed to increase the manufacturing attractiveness, benefits for women and training provided for gender related topics (language, etc).

Best-practice examples in current EIT Manufacturing initiatives, beyond recruitment and inclusion policies, advocate for gender equality in the manufacturing industry. The following outlines a set of example initiatives to boost the participation of women in the EIT Manufacturing organisation and the manufacturing industry, eliciting a broader sectoral impact:

- Women TechEU
- Supernovas
- RIS Leaders
- STRADA
- Girls Go Circular
- EIT Red Kalyna

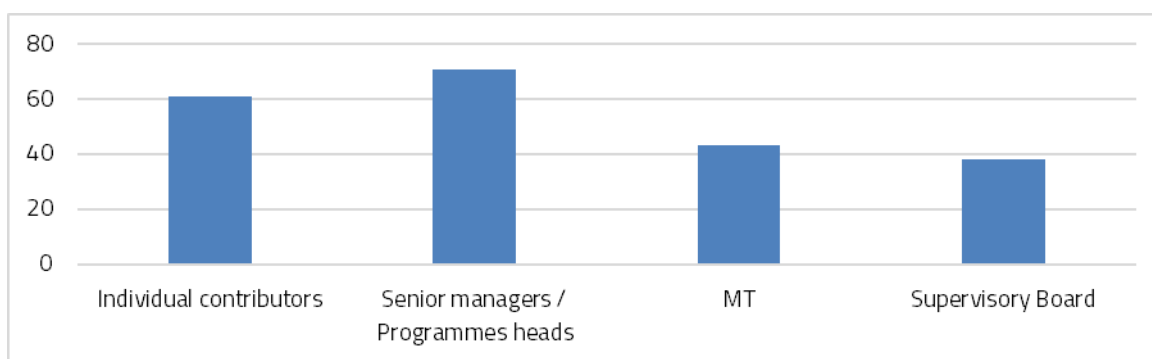
These activities will be further detailed in their specific thematic section.

5.2. GENDER BALANCED REPRESENTATION IN STAFF AND MANAGEMENT, AND INTERNAL CAPACITY AND AWARENESS RAISING

EIT Manufacturing maintains a strong institutional commitment to gender balance, diversity and inclusion across all levels of the organisation. As of the latest reporting period, 61% of the total staff identify as woman, with 43% representation at the management level. This marks a continued upward trajectory since the previous reporting cycle and exceeds sectoral benchmarks for gender representation in manufacturing and innovation leadership.

As part of thematic area 2, EIT Manufacturing has conducted a detailed analysis of gender representation across all layers of the organisation — from individual contributors to senior managers and programme heads, directors and up to the Management Board and Supervisory Board levels. This multi-tiered assessment ensures a comprehensive understanding of gender distribution throughout the organisational structure and informs targeted actions to promote equity in career progression and decision-making.

While the applicant pool for recent management vacancies reflected a gender imbalance- with only 10% of applicants identifying as woman – proactive measures were implemented during the recruitment process. These included targeted attention during CV screening to ensure fair consideration. As a result, 50% of shortlisted and interviewed candidates identified as woman, culminating in a gender balanced onboarding outcome for director – level positions in 2022-2023. The composition of EIT Manufacturing’s Supervisory Board (SB) also reflects the organisation’s commitment to inclusive governance. Five out of thirteen SB members are women, including the Vice Chair of the Board, underscoring progress toward gender-balanced decision-making at the highest level.



*Current reporting follows a binary framework (female/male) due to existing data collection systems. We recognize and respect a spectrum of gender identities and are working towards more inclusive data practices.

Figure 4. Gender representation across organisational levels at EIT Manufacturing. Source: EIT Manufacturing.

Within the broader leadership structure, 71% of staff at the managerial level across the Innovation, Business Creation, and Education functions are women. This pool represents a strong pipeline of qualified professionals with the experience and capabilities to assume future leadership positions. Their presence reinforces EIT Manufacturing's position as a driver of inclusive growth and transformation within the European manufacturing ecosystem.

EIT Manufacturing acknowledges that gender is not binary and is committed to creating an inclusive work environment that supports individuals of all gender identities and expressions.

EIT Manufacturing also contributes to internal capacity and awareness with several actions. Mandatory *Unconscious bias* training for all employees has been implemented since 2024 and *People Managers* training, including gender equality awareness, were implemented at the beginning of 2025. On the other hand, an annual survey has been implemented since 2023 to understand the work environment with information on gender treatment and different harassment topics. Once the results are gathered, dedicated and appropriate actions are put in place to solve the problem, for instance, workshops about cultural aspects. In addition, yearly PDAs for employees are considered to understand equal treatment of gender and workload sharing among peers. Finally, HR follow-up meetings with all employees have been implemented regularly since 2024 to address any work environment issues, harassment, conflicts, training, etc.

5.3. EDUCATION

EIT Manufacturing demonstrates a clear commitment to mainstreaming gender considerations across its diverse portfolio of education and training activities. These educational initiatives are co-designed and delivered in close collaboration with a broad network of partners, ensuring they are both innovative and tightly aligned with industry

needs. By targeting a wide spectrum of learners – including students, young professionals, entrepreneurs, and lifelong learners – the educational offer is both inclusive and responsive, with broad geographic outreach facilitated by platforms like the EIT Manufacturing Academy.

A crucial element underpinning these activities is the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data. EIT Manufacturing integrates gender indicators into key performance metrics, enabling a clear view of where disparities may exist and where progress is being made. Specifically, data are collected for:

- [EITHE07] Graduates from EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes by gender (including RIS)
- [EITHE08] Participants in (non-degree) education and training by gender (including RIS)
- [EITHE05] Startups created of EIT labelled MSc/PhD programmes by gender (including RIS).

In 2023 among EIT-labelled graduates, the gender distribution showed 25% female and 63% male graduates. For participants engaged in non-labelled activities, the proportion was 42% female and 53% male. This data reflects ongoing challenges but also areas of improvement, with specific measures introduced to further enhance female participation rates.

A regional breakdown highlights the distribution across the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) countries, showing RIS Female 44% and RIS Male 55% participants, underlining the importance of targeted outreach and support initiatives in these regions.

The figures below illustrate the overall gender participation trends for 2023 within 2023-2025 Business Plan.

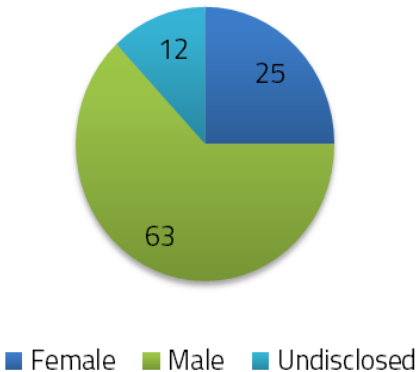


Figure 5. Graduates from EIT labelled programmes (2023)
Source: EIT Manufacturing.

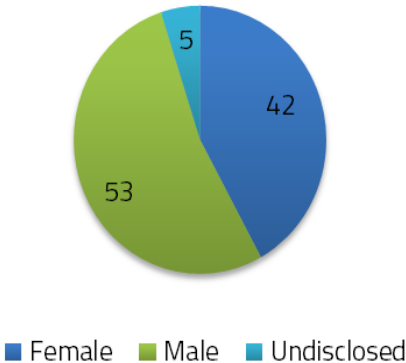


Figure 6. Participants in non-labelled education & training (2023)
Source: EIT Manufacturing.

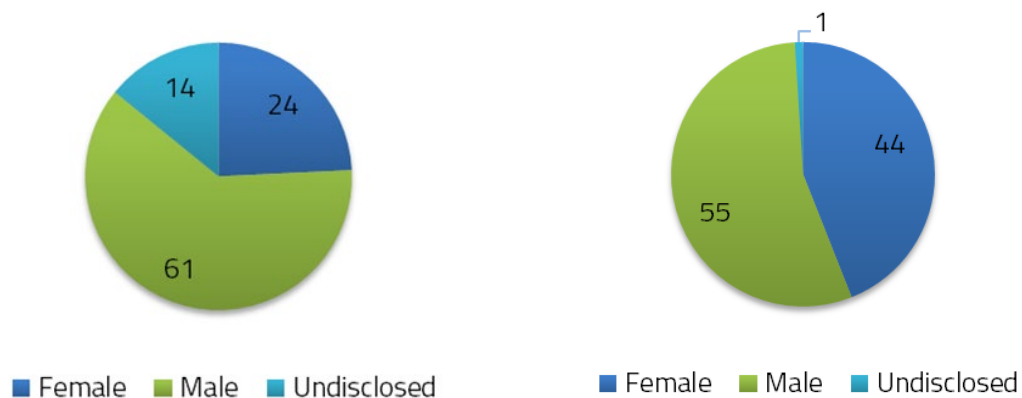


Figure 7. RIS-Graduates from EIT labelled programmes. (2023)

Source: EIT Manufacturing.

Figure 8. RIS-Participants in Non-labelled programmes (2023)

Source: EIT Manufacturing.

Among the best practices emerging within this landscape is the **STRADA programme** (2023-2025), a fully online, pan-European leadership initiative specifically designed to address the persistent underrepresentation of women in the manufacturing sector. Targeting MSc and PhD students, researchers, and industry professionals, STRADA is structured to deliver future-focused skills in leadership, digitalisation, sustainability, and entrepreneurship. By offering free participation and a modular learning format, it removes traditional barriers to access, while the integrated mentorship model enhances personal and professional development.

The programme's impact is already evident and quantifiable. In 2024 alone, STRADA engaged 115 participants — 65 mentees and 50 mentors — representing 21 countries, with 58 participants hailing from EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) countries. A total of 103 certifications were awarded, comprising 54 mentees and 49 mentors, while learners completed 237 distinct learning paths on the digital platform. STRADA's external engagement also saw notable success, with a presence at 13 national and international events collectively attended by more than 13,400 individuals. The pilot year in 2023 had already set a strong precedent, involving 98 participants in non-labelled training activities, 67 of whom were from RIS countries. Additionally, 1,000 individuals were reached through targeted engagement programmes, alongside the creation of one structured learning path and five digital lessons.

Importantly, STRADA aligns with EIT Manufacturing's overarching strategic goals related to gender equality and skills development. It offers measurable outcomes through robust KPIs, reinforces regional inclusivity, and embeds themes of sustainability and innovation throughout its curriculum. As the programme evolves into a co-funded model involving both public and private stakeholders, it is poised for long-term

sustainability and greater scale. Its success positions it as a replicable blueprint not only for manufacturing but also for other sectors committed to addressing gender imbalances through targeted, inclusive, and skill-based interventions.

Gender dimension is also considered in all activities of **EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative**, led by EIT Manufacturing.

EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative ensured equal representation of male and female pledgers, achieving a 50% M/F ratio on average. As an example, the Deep Tech Education and Skills Days 2024, held in Warsaw in November 2024, featured 60 speakers, 36 of them female. The EIT Deep Tech Talent Initiative Advisory Board, set up and managed by EIT Manufacturing, comprises an equal number of women and men (4 of each).

These achievements reflect targeted actions, including team briefings and a focused selection process, which meant ensuring equal communication to reach both male and female applicants and taking gender dimension (together with geography and sector) in the selection process, all demonstrating commitment to fostering an inclusive environment.

Among the number of talents trained, the goal of 30% of women was achieved for every year (2023, 2024).

Another best practice in which EIT Manufacturing is involved is the **Girls Go Circular** educational initiative, led by the EIT Community, coordinated by EIT RawMaterials, and supported by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture of the European Commission, whose mission is to equip students, particularly young women, with digital and entrepreneurial skills through the Circular Learning Space, fostering sustainability awareness and preparing them for future careers. At the moment of elaborating this policy, over 80,000 students have been trained, 86% of which were girls, and over 1,000 schools have been supported.

In addition, RIS education activities such as “**SHAPING - Shaping the Next Generation of manufacturing professionals**”, aimed to motivate and raise the interest of young students (ages 12-18), with a special focus on females, and on teaching the teachers for activities in the field of manufacturing have resulted in +20.000 pupils trained in the period 2020-2023.

5.4. BUSINESS CREATION AND ACCELERATION

There is a growing interest and involvement of women in manufacturing startups and scaleups. However, additional efforts are still needed to strengthen and support female participation across the industry and within EIT Manufacturing’s programmes.

To track progress and benchmark developments, EIT Manufacturing collects gender-disaggregated data across key performance indicators. These include metrics such as:

- [EITHE03.1] Supported startups/scaleups by gender of CEO/Owner (including RIS)
- [EITHE04.1] Startups established by gender of CEO/Owner (including RIS)
- [EITHE06.1] Investment attracted by KIC-supported startups and scaleups, by gender (including RIS)

EIT Manufacturing has supported 233 startups with female CEO/Owner in during the 2020-2024 period with access to market and finance services. Since 2021, EIT Manufacturing invested in 7 female-led startups out of 23 startups, with strengthening the criteria on female-led startups under criteria Implementation (Sub criteria: Team structure) within Accelerate Call.

The **Venture Building programme** has been initiated for early-stage startups and university spin offs in 2023 and in the three editions has supported 20 female-led startups and spin offs out of 49 in total.

The Venture Building Programme is designed to support industrial startups and spinoffs. The selected early-stage startups and spinoffs are supported through expert workshops and tailored mentoring focused on market and investment readiness, networking and pitching events to enhance visibility and business development opportunities, as well as targeted introductions to potential corporate customers and investors facilitated by the programme partner.

As part of the **EIT Community Supernovas**, EIT Manufacturing has organized the Business Angels Academy in 2023 and 2024 to support both new entrants and experienced women professionals. In 2023, there were 71 Graduates and in 2024 89 Graduates from the programmes. Also, EIT Manufacturing organizes investment forums for women-led startups. In 2023, 3 investment forums were organized on food, manufacturing and energy and mobility. A total of 28 women-led startups pitched their solutions and received pitch training. In 2024, 25 supported start-ups/Scaleups were supported by EIT Manufacturing and there was a total of €1.7M of investment attracted. Finally, EIT Manufacturing has also developed a database tool with information on all the female-led and/or founded startups that have been supported by EIT (from any KIC and programme), in collaboration with Dealroom. Currently over 850 women-led startups are showcased from over 40 countries across Europe including 44 manufacturing companies. This tool supports investors with access to high-quality deal flow but also other stakeholders such as journalists and report publishers, corporates looking for partnerships and/or dealflow, other entrepreneurs, users etc., with a matchmaking tool for startups looking for investors and job postings, and to raise awareness and create role models.

In 2024, the consortium of **Women TechEU**, an EISMEA funded programme, supported 40 women-led startups (C-level) in deep tech during the months September to December 2024. Each beneficiary receives €75k grants (non-dilutive finance) as well as a personalised business development programme which includes mentoring, coaching and targeted training among other options. Thanks to the coordination of EIT

Manufacturing, these startups are also participating in EIT Manufacturing calls and getting the support of the Business Development and Innovation team.

5.5. INNOVATION

The EIT Manufacturing portfolio of innovation activities is composed of collaborative, cross-disciplinary consortia aiming to co-develop and deploy innovative products, processes, or technologies that contribute to the competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability of European manufacturing. These projects strive to bring innovations to the market that improve industrial productivity, enable greener processes, and advance digital and social transformation in manufacturing ecosystems.

EIT Manufacturing collects targeted gender-related KPIs to assess the inclusiveness and impact of its innovation activities. These data points help evaluate both participation and the effectiveness of actions promoting gender equity and leadership in manufacturing. In particular:

- [EITHE04.1 & 4.4] Startups created of/for innovation by gender of CEO/owner (including RIS)
- % of women-led consortia in funded innovation activities – tracks the presence of women in key decision-making roles.

Overall, EIT Manufacturing supported more than 230 women-led startups and more than 40 projects have women coordinating the implementation of the activity or leading the commercialisation of the results.

In addition, to capture our broader impact, we aim to collect both quantitative data (e.g. investment volumes, employment rates, training completions) and qualitative insights (e.g. testimonials, learning outcomes, value of role models). These data points will help us understand not just participation, but the effectiveness and inclusiveness of our programmes in fostering gender equity and leadership across the manufacturing innovation ecosystem.

EIT Manufacturing has co-funded more than 200 innovation projects driven by industry, research centers, and technology providers. Some of these projects explicitly target inclusive innovation or gender-relevant challenges in the manufacturing sector, such as improving workplace ergonomics, addressing the needs of female-dominated labour segments, or promoting diversity in tech development teams.

Furthermore, EIT Manufacturing will continue to analyse gender-disaggregated data to assess the role of women in innovation activities, from project design to implementation, and to identify gaps; such as the limited representation of women among engineers, inventors, or end-users in industrial validation phases.

Although the innovation portfolio has seen underrepresentation of projects explicitly addressing gender-specific industrial challenges, EIT Manufacturing is determined to

raise awareness about the importance of diversity in innovation. This includes fostering innovation that addresses structural inequalities in the workforce, the design of inclusive industrial solutions, and challenges experienced by underrepresented groups in manufacturing environments.

To further embed gender and inclusiveness considerations into its innovation support, EIT Manufacturing will consider additional requirement in its Calls for Proposals for applicant consortia to describe how gender aspects are considered in the design and implementation of their projects. This may include:

- Addressing gender-specific industrial or workforce challenges
- Ensuring gender-inclusive stakeholder engagement
- Developing outputs that support diversity or are shaped by user needs inclusive of gender perspectives

5.6. RIS

Female representation in the manufacturing sector within the EU's Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) countries remains limited, with women comprising approximately 30% of the industrial workforce. Their participation is notably higher in specific sub-sectors like apparel manufacturing, while areas such as heavy machinery and engineering continue to be predominantly male-dominated¹⁷. To address this imbalance, EIT Manufacturing has been putting some efforts with dedicated activities.

Launched in 2021, **RIS LEADERS** is a competition that recognises and celebrates women innovators from EIT RIS (Regional Innovation Scheme) countries who are transforming manufacturing challenges into breakthrough solutions that benefit people and the planet - Celebrating Women Innovators in Manufacturing. The initiative has a dual impact:

- It empowers women with skills to succeed, offering pitch training to strengthen their visibility, and their ability to promote their projects, solutions or to attract investors.
- It creates role models by promoting outstanding innovators through EIT Manufacturing's channels, inspiring more women and girls to pursue leadership in manufacturing.

By the end of 2024 out of its 4 editions, RIS LEADERS has:

- Trained over 120 women innovators from RIS countries.
- Organised 4 pitching sessions at EIT Manufacturing events with 24 women pitchers.
- Awarded 12 monetary prizes to outstanding women leaders from RIS countries.
- Provided 24 success and motivational stories of women innovators in the

¹⁷ <https://ilostat.ilo.org/blog/where-women-work-female-dominated-occupations-and-sectors/>

- manufacturing sector from RIS countries.
- Raised role models from RIS countries.
- Motivated more women to innovate and lead.

This competition goes beyond awards: it amplifies women's voices in manufacturing, contributes to building a more inclusive innovation ecosystem, and motivates the next generation of female leaders specially in RIS countries in which the gender gap and female representation is more accentuated.

Launched in 2023, EIT Manufacturing actively contribute to the **EIT Red Kalyna**, an EIT Community initiative designed to spotlight and empower Ukrainian women innovators who are making a remarkable impact in their communities and beyond - despite the immense challenges posed by war. The initiative recognises women from across sectors who are leading innovation, rebuilding efforts and societal resilience through entrepreneurship, science and leadership. EIT Red Kalyna has a twofold mission:

- It celebrates Ukrainian women's achievements by showcasing their inspiring stories on a European stage - creating visibility and influence for those driving change under extraordinary circumstances.
- It builds a supportive community of female innovators, providing networking opportunities, capacity-building and international exposure, including a dedicated study visit to an EU innovation hub for the finalists.

By the end of 2024, the initiative has:

- Recognised and awarded 20 outstanding women innovators from across Ukraine through two editions of the award.
- Organised inspirational events and storytelling campaigns across Europe to raise awareness of Ukrainian women's contributions to innovation.
- Forged new connections between Ukrainian women leaders and European innovation networks, supporting long-term growth and collaboration.

EIT Red Kalyna is more than just an award - it is a symbol of resilience and hope, designed to elevate women's voices in Ukraine's innovation ecosystem and inspire future generations of women to lead and rebuild.

On top of that, EIT Manufacturing encourage its **EIT Manufacturing Country Representatives** to keep a gender perspective in their activities as well as promote these values within their activities. Out of 13 EIT Manufacturing Country Representatives, 11 are managed by women.

In addition, RIS education, Business Creation or Education activities are aligned to the measures explained in previous dedicated sections.

6. ANNEX 2. EIT MANUFACTURING GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2025- 2028 (4-YEAR)

Informed by the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025¹⁸, Horizon Europe provisions for Gender Equality Plans¹⁹, the EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda 2021-2027²⁰ and the EIT Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan 2022-2027²¹, the EIT Manufacturing Gender Equality Action Plan (GEP) sets out a roadmap to implement the EIT Manufacturing Gender Mainstreaming Policy.

The 4-year Gender Equality Action Plan (GEP) 2025–2028 (Annex 2) aims to uphold and enhance good practices within EIT Manufacturing, ensuring equal opportunities and the fair representation of women across the organisation. The plan also promotes the active participation of women in education, entrepreneurship, innovation and the broader manufacturing ecosystem. The GEP outlines targeted measures to be implemented across six strategic objectives, as outlined in the policy above:

1. **Strengthening the leadership role of EIT Manufacturing:** Position EIT Manufacturing as a leading actor in advancing gender equality and increasing women's participation across the manufacturing sector and its ecosystem.
2. **Achieving gender-balanced representation and building organisational capacity and awareness:** Promote gender balance across staff, leadership, and decision-making roles in EIT Manufacturing, while fostering gender equality in the workplace, and in innovation, technology, entrepreneurship, education and research.
3. **Education:** Promote gender equality and support the active involvement of women in EIT Manufacturing's educational programmes and related initiatives.
4. **Business Creation and Acceleration:** Support women entrepreneurs by integrating gender-sensitive approaches in EITM's entrepreneurship activities and services.
5. **Innovation:** Embed gender equality principles into innovation processes, ensuring inclusive participation and support for women-led innovation in manufacturing.
6. **Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS):** Promote gender equality within EIT Manufacturing's RIS activities, addressing local and regional disparities and ensuring inclusive engagement in less represented areas.

¹⁸ European Commission (2020) [A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#)

¹⁹ European Commission (2021) [Gender equality: a strengthened commitment in Horizon Europe](#)

²⁰ EIT (2021) [Strategic Innovation Agenda \(SIA\) for 2021-2027](#)

²¹ EIT (2022) [EIT Gender Equality Policy 2022-2027](#)

Objectives	Activities	Results	Indicators	Responsible	Timeline
1. Strengthening the lead role of EIT Manufacturing on gender equality and women's participation in the Manufacturing ecosystem and community	Embed gender equality in the organisation of events and conferences by having gender balanced speaker lists	Increased opportunity for women opinion leaders to participate in EIT Manufacturing-organised events and inform high-level conversations	% of events with a panel including at least one woman (target: 90% of events; 50% women in all panels as optimal)	Communications department ICs	Already common practice 2025-2028 continuous
	Organise specific events, round tables, workshops or panels on gender equality in manufacturing technology and innovation, to disseminate and raise awareness of challenges faced by women in the manufacturing sector	Increased appreciation and understanding of challenges faced by women in the health ecosystem among EIT Manufacturing's community and Partners network	Increased appreciation and understanding of challenges faced by women in the health ecosystem among EIT Manufacturing's community and Partners network	Communications department	2025-2028 continuous
	Scope opportunities to collaborate with NGOs advocating for gender equality, including in the manufacturing sector	Closer collaboration with expert players promoting gender equality established	Number of collaborations (e.g. via MoU; target: at least 1)	EITM Gender Mainstreaming Task Force	Q4 2027
	Organise women in manufacturing campaign, increasing the attractiveness of the sector through the stories of journey from successful entrepreneurs and innovators	Increased awareness of career opportunities for women in manufacturing. Engagement through storytelling from successful female entrepreneurs and innovators.	Shift perceptions of manufacturing as a male-dominated sector and inspire young women to consider manufacturing roles. ☑Contribute to a pipeline of future female leaders and innovators in the industry.	Communications department	2025-2028 continuous

Objectives	Activities	Results	Indicators	Responsible	Timeline
2. Achieving a gender balanced representation in staff and management and building capacity and raising awareness in the internal organisation	Deliver internal trainings on gender equality, unconscious bias, and inclusive leadership, and gender-sensitive innovation	Increased awareness and understanding of gender equality and related topics among employees.	Number of trainings conducted (target: all new staff members) Number and % of employees participating in these sessions (target: 100%)	HR Department	Q3 2026
	Set gender parity targets for recruitment and promotion	Increased representation of underrepresented genders in management roles	% of women in management roles (target: 40%)	HR Department	Q3 2026
	Review and adapt recruitment processes to ensure inclusivity (e.g., gender-neutral job descriptions, diverse hiring panels)	Inclusive recruitment and promotion practices	Gender ratio of shortlisted candidates and new hires (target: 40%)	HR Department	Q3 2026
	Introduce mentoring and sponsorship schemes to support career progression	More equitable access to career development opportunities	Satisfaction rate with leadership development and mentoring programmes (target: 80%)	HR Department/ Department Managers	Q3 2026
3. Education: promote gender equality and women's participation	Develop and implement targeted recruitment campaigns for female students and participants via dedicated communication channels	Increased gender balance across all levels of EITM educational engagement including EIT Labelled & non-labelled activities- KPIs [EITHE07], [EITHE08]	Percentage of female participants in labelled and non-labelled education and training programmes by Q4 2025 (target: 40%, if feasible), and by Q4 2028 (target: 40%, if feasible)	Education & Training	Q4 2025 Q4 2028

Objectives	Activities	Results	Indicators	Responsible	Timeline
	Promote gender-sensitive scholarships, reduced fees for women in seasonal schools, and dedicated campaigns	Broader access and increased visibility of women in manufacturing-related education, increased attractiveness of manufacturing industry for women	Percentage of female participants in labelled and non-labelled education and training programmes (target: 40% by Q4 2025; aspirational target: 40% by Q4 2028, if feasible)	Education & Training	Q4 2025 Q4 2028
	Provide continued support and scaleup of dedicated programmes	Increased institutional accountability for gender inclusivity	% of female participants in labelled and non-labelled education and training (target: 25% by Q4 2025; if feasible, 40% by Q4 2028).	Education & Training	Q4 2025 Q4 2028
	Monitor participation of women in EITM proposals and funded activities	Enhanced benchmarking of women's engagement in education pipelines	% of proposals with at least one female contributor (target: 80%) % of funded activities involving at least one female participant (target: 80%)	CPM/ Education & Training	Annual
	Ensure gender is mainstreamed in education-related CfPs: • Require gender equality plans from consortia • Include criteria on mixed teams and inclusive leadership • Require inclusive programme design and incorporation of gender dimension into educ. content, as award criterion	Increased institutional accountability for gender inclusivity	% participation of women in EITM proposals and funded activities (target: 25% female participation). % proposed education content includes gender dimension beyond generic statements (target: 100%)	Education & Training/ RIS/ CPM	Q4 2028

Objectives	Activities	Results	Indicators	Responsible	Timeline
	Encourage female participation in startups from EIT-labelled programmes	Increased representation of women as entrepreneurs and innovators in manufacturing [EITHE05]	<p>% of startups created through EIT-labelled MSc/PhD programmes that are led by women or have a female CEO/Owner (target: ≥25%)</p> <p>% of startups founded by students or graduates of EIT-labelled MSc/PhD programmes, or by participants in other EIT-labelled activities, with a female CEO/Owner [EITHE05] (target: >20%)</p> <p>% of female graduates from EIT-labelled programmes who join startups (target: ≥30% by 2028)</p>	Education & Training / RIS	Q4 2025 Q4 2028
	Track post-graduation employment of female learners	Improved understanding of female graduates' transition into the manufacturing workforce, enabling the development of targeted measures to increase women's engagement	<p>% of female graduates entering manufacturing-sector employment post-graduation (target: 30%)</p> <p>% of female graduates employed in engineering or science roles, compared to sector averages (target: 20%)</p> <p>% of female employment in EITM-supported activities compared to sector averages (target: ≥20%)</p>	Education & Training	Q4 2028

:

Objectives	Activities	Results	Indicators	Responsible	Timeline
	Assess the contribution of EITM to reducing skill gaps and promoting female participation in the EU manufacturing workforce	Strategic insight into effectiveness of EITM programming on systemic change	<p>% of female graduates trained in each EITM priority skill area (target: 40%)</p> <p>% of female graduates reporting skill enhancement through EITM programmes (target: ≥30%)</p> <p>Success rate of EITM female graduates in securing employment or launching careers in the EU manufacturing sector (target: 30%)</p>	Education & Training	Q4 2028
4. Business Creation & Acceleration: promote gender equality and women's participation	Promote female entrepreneurship, self-employment and startup creation among female Innovation consortia members	Startups and spinoffs created by female founders and managers enrolled in and graduates from EIT-labelled programmes or from Innovation consortia	% of startups and scaleups created off/for innovation have woman CEO/Owner [KPI EITHE04.1] (target: 30%)	Inno2Market	Q4 2027
	Attract, support and fund female entrepreneurship and businesses	Female-led startups supported with growth and internationalisation services and funding	% of the startups supported have woman CEO/Owner [EITHE03] (target: 35%)	Inno2Market/Investments	Q4 2025 /2026
	Encourage and promote fundraising activities by female-led startups and scaleups	Investments raised from public and private sources by female-led startups and scaleups	% of investment attracted is by supported female-led startups/scaleups [EITHE06] (target: >15%)	Investments	Q4 2025 /2026

:

Objectives	Activities	Results	Indicators	Responsible	Timeline
5. Innovation: promote gender equality and women's participation	Implement dedicated marketing campaigns to attract female innovators to apply to innovation calls	Increased participation of women-led companies as business owners	% of innovations brought to the market come from women-led companies [EITHE02] (target: >25%)	Growth4Impact / (Marketing) and Communication	Annual
	Include a focus on gender equality in all EITM Innovation CfPs – i.e. gender dimension is incorporated into EITM Innovation Calls as obligatory, award criterion	All applicants are invited to share their gender equality policy or measures ensuring gender equality and diversity during the performance of their projects Specific attention will be brought to applications with an outcome directly enabling better gender balance in manufacturing	% applications addressing gender equality beyond generic statements (target: 100%) % applications demonstrate a positive impact of the developed solution towards more gender equality in manufacturing (target: 10%)	Inno2Market	Annual
	Ensure gender parity on all evaluation panels	Evaluation panels are made of 3 evaluators and 1 rapporteur. Gender balance is a condition when recruiting expert, and special attention will be made to ensure it is reached per panel or on average	% women overall among contracted Inno2market experts (target: 50%)	Inno2Market/ PMO	Annual

:

Objectives	Activities	Results	Indicators	Responsible	Timeline
6. RIS: promote gender equality and women's participation	Train women leaders in the manufacturing sector in RIS countries	Deploy a pitch training	Female EIT RIS Participants in (non-degree) education and training (target: 15)	Corporate Affairs and Strategic Initiatives (CASI)	Annual
	Give visibility to women leaders in the manufacturing sector in RIS countries	Organise an award ceremony, create success stories and disseminate	Success stories (target: 6)	CASI	Annual
	Empower women leaders in the manufacturing sector in RIS countries	Develop RIS Leaders Competition	Number of participants in the competition (target: 20)	CASI	Annual
	Promote Ukrainian female entrepreneurs, educators and mentors	Develop EIT Red Kalyna Initiative	Number/% of women nominated (target: 20)	CASI	Annual
	Recognise Ukrainian female entrepreneurs, educators and mentors	Dissemination of EIT Red Kalyna Initiative and its participants	Number of women awarded (target: 10)	CASI	Annual
	Ensure gender equality in selection of proposals/participants in the RIS dedicated Open Calls	Evaluators for open call, are selected considering geographical and gender balance.	% women overall among contracted RIS experts (target: 50%)	CASI/ Growth4Impact	2025-2028 continuous
	Promote gender equality in the management of EIT Manufacturing country representatives (former RIS HUBs)	Request for gender representation and consideration in evaluation on the next open call	% women representation in EIT RIS countries (target: 50%)	CASI	Q1 2026

: