GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2026-2028

Barleti Institute for Research and Development (BIRD)

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Proposed approval authority: Executive Director Prof.dr. Aleksander xhuvani
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1. Purpose and scope

BIRD commits to equal opportunities, non-discrimination and an inclusive working and research environment. This plan sets out proportionate, measurable actions for staff, management, researchers, external experts and project teams, as applicable. It applies to recruitment, employment practices, governance, research and innovation activities, partnerships and institutional events. The plan will become effective only after formal adoption.

2. Institutional context and baseline

BIRD operates in research and development. BIRD management confirmed on 9 November 2026 that all 15 people listed on its public "Our Team" page are currently employed.

The confirmed 2026 workforce gender baseline comprises 7 women (46.7%) and 8 men (53.3%), based on information supplied by BIRD management.

This aggregate headcount does not establish the gender composition of leadership or individual employment categories.

2026 workforce gender composition (management-confirmed): Women: 7 of 15 (46.7%); Men: 8 of 15 (53.3%). These figures describe overall staff headcount, not gender representation by seniority or function.

3. Governance, ownership and resources

Management should designate a Gender Equality Focal Point and an alternate, provide dedicated staff time and a modest annual implementation budget, and review progress at least annually. **GEP Focal Point for BIRD is Ms.Kejda Nuhu** and the focal point coordinates data collection, training, consultation, complaints referrals and the action tracker. Management remains accountable for decisions and resourcing. Specific names, staff time and budget shall be inserted at adoption.

4. Data collection, monitoring and privacy

An annual internal review will assess staff composition by gender, recruitment and promotion outcomes where relevant, leadership representation, training participation, leave and flexible-working uptake, and reported concerns. Data will be voluntary where appropriate, handled under applicable privacy law, limited to necessary purposes and presented in aggregate. BIRD will publish a concise progress report at least every two years and conduct an internal annual review; reporting frequency will be aligned with the applicable call requirements.

5. Priority areas and commitments

5.1 Work–life balance and organisational culture

Promote fair workloads, respectful communication, flexible arrangements where operationally possible and equal access to professional opportunities.

5.2 Leadership and decision-making

Review gender representation in decision-making bodies and encourage balanced participation in committees, project leadership and institutional consultations.

5.3 Recruitment and career development

Use transparent vacancy criteria, inclusive language, structured assessment and equal access to training, mentoring and progression.

5.4 Gender dimension in research and innovation

At project design stage, assess whether sex- and gender-related factors are relevant to research questions, methodology, sampling, data analysis and expected outcomes; document the reasoning.

5.5 Prevention of harassment and discrimination

Adopt or strengthen confidential reporting routes, non-retaliation protections, impartial handling and referral to appropriate support or authorities as required.

6. Training and awareness

Provide induction information to new staff and at least one annual learning activity for staff and decision-makers on gender equality, inclusive conduct, unconscious bias and safe reporting. Researchers and project managers will receive targeted guidance on the gender dimension in research proposals.

7. Implementation action plan (2026–2028)

Timing	Action	Owner	Evidence / indicator
2026–2028	Review of recruitment and selection procedures	Management / HR	Standard criteria and inclusive vacancy template
2026–2028	Add gender relevance to research proposals	Research leads	Documented check for new proposals
Q1 2027	Approve confidential reporting and response protocol	Management	Protocol communicated to personnel
Annually 2027–2028	Review indicators, feedback and corrective actions	Management / focal point	Annual internal review minutes
By Q4 2028	Evaluate results and prepare successor plan	Management	Evaluation and draft next GEP

8. Indicators and targets

Initial process targets, subject to baseline validation: (i) 100% of new recruitment calls use standardised criteria; (ii) at least one equality-awareness activity each year; (iii) all new research proposals undergo a documented gender-relevance check; (iv) annual internal monitoring and at least biennial public progress reporting; (v) all reports of harassment are handled under an approved confidential procedure. Representation targets will be set only after baseline assessment and consultation.

9. Consultation, communication and revision

Management will consult staff and relevant collaborators before adoption. The approved plan will be communicated internally and made publicly available on bird.al. The focal point will invite feedback annually. Material changes in organisational structure, law or programme requirements will trigger a review; a full evaluation will take place in 2028.

References

European Commission, Gender equality in research and innovation: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en

European Commission, Horizon Europe GEP guidance (2025): https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d9468388-df75-11f0-8439-01aa75ed71a1

Funding & Tenders Portal FAQ 15132 (2026): https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/support/faq/15132

Annex A.
BIRD institutional profile and evidence base

This annex incorporates publicly documented institutional information and management-confirmed 2026 staffing. Project activity descriptions do not establish that proposed GEP measures have already been implemented.

Public team roster and workforce baseline methodology

BIRD, "Skuadra jonë" (Our Team). The website lists 15 named individuals and their roles. BIRD management confirmed on 9 November 2026 that all 15 are currently employed by BIRD. The roster does not establish full-time equivalents, contract terms, or gender-disaggregated statistics.

Name (as published)	Role (English translation)
Aleksandër Xhuvani	Executive Director
Kejda Nuhu	Project Manager and GEP focal point
Blerina Banushi	Office Coordinator
Besarta Tafa	Project Coordinator
Blerina Metko	Legal Officer
Olta Murataj	Communications Expert
Ledio Kosta	Technical Expert
Luan Bekteshi	IT Expert
Gazmend Zeneli	Environmental Expert
Olgerta Puta	Finance Manager
Adriana Qafa	Trainer
Sokol Shurdhi	Trainer
Koi Barbullushi	Software Trainer
Erli Nurçellari	Information Technology Trainer
Dionis Çollaku	Information Technology Trainer

Baseline verification and monitoring

BIRD's confirmed aggregate 2026 workforce baseline is 15 employees: 7 women (46.7%) and 8 men (53.3%), according to management. BIRD will maintain confidential, self-reported and appropriately protected gender-disaggregated records, and review composition by role, leadership responsibility and employment category annually. Aggregate figures will be published only where confidentiality can be preserved.

Proposed 2026 action: appoint the Gender Equality Focal Point, validate the confirmed aggregate baseline (7 women and 8 men) against confidential HR records and verify HR

classifications for the 15 employees. Proposed 2027–2028 action: update workforce and leadership indicators annually and use findings to inform proportionate corrective measures.

Institutional identity and mission

Barleti Institute for Research and Development (BIRD), based in Tirana, Albania, describes itself as an interdisciplinary research and development platform connecting science, entrepreneurship and society. Its mission emphasizes applied research, open innovation, living labs, knowledge and technology transfer, professional skills, and sustainable territorial, digital and social development[1].
Registered/project identification reported by BIRD: Participant Identification Code (**PIC**) **885069808**.

Institutional contact:

- Executive Director Prof. Dr. Aleksandër Xhuvani, director.bird@umb.edu.al .
- Address reported: Rruga *"Sami Frashëri*", Nr. 41, Tirana, Albania.

BIRD describes itself as the applied research and innovation unit of the Barleti Group. Its institutional relationship and independent legal status must be checked against the Participant Register before GEP eligibility declarations.

The report records 15 professionals across six functional groups: project leadership and management (3); finance, administration and legal (3); technical and IT (2); environment (1); communications (1); training and capacity building (5). Management separately confirmed an aggregate 2026 gender baseline of 7 women and 8 men. Gender composition by functional group or seniority has not been supplied and must not be inferred.

Sources:

- https://bird.al/evolve-project-kick-off-meeting-in-tirana-regional-open-innovation-hubs-for-green-growth-through-digital-transformation/
- https://bird.al/bird-pjese-e-takimit-nderkombetar-te-projektit-territory-ne-brindisi-itali
- https://bird.al/aktiviteti-virtual-tour-pilot-actions/
- https://bird.al/5helix-startup-diagnostic-orientation-day/

[1] https://bird.al/rreth-nesh/

Publicly named project personnel (historical activity references)

Project activity references identify Prof. Dr. Aleksandër Xhuvani, Kejda Nuhu and Prof. Asoc. Genta Rexha in specified project roles. The current employee roster and aggregate workforce baseline are documented separately in Annex D.

GEP Focal Point for BIRD : Kejda Nuhu email: co@bird.al

Annex B. Tailored implementation measures (proposed)

Measure	2026–2028 milestone	Indicator	Owner (proposed)
Institutional baseline	Compile confidential gender-disaggregated staff and leadership baseline	Baseline report completed and reviewed annually	Management / GEP focal point
Inclusive project design	Apply a gender and inclusion checklist to new research, innovation, and other proposals	Share of new proposals screened	Project managers
Startup and training access	Review participation in 5HELIX, skills training and mentorship by gender where lawful and feasible	Annual participation breakdown and corrective actions	Programme coordinators
Workplace culture	Run annual staff awareness session on equal opportunity and harassment prevention	At least one session each year; attendance recorded	GEP focal point
Transparent publication	Publish signed GEP and annual short implementation update on bird.al	GEP URL and annual updates available	Management / communications

Projects and operational relevance to gender equality

- **TERRITORY:** Disaster-response technology, drones, AI, pilots and training. Proposed GEP application: monitor equal access to capacity-building, consider different community needs in preparedness activities and use inclusive consultation.
- **EVOLVE:** Open innovation hubs, biodiversity and digital services for SMEs. Proposed GEP application: track participation in workshops and innovation services by gender where lawful and practical; review barriers to access.
- **5HELIX:** Start-up incubation, mentoring, prototyping and acceleration for students and young innovators. Proposed GEP application: ensure inclusive outreach and transparent selection; review participation in mentoring and incubation.
- **STEAM and prior training programmes:** Skills development for young people and professional training. Proposed GEP application: monitor accessibility and inclusion in training design.
- **REEHUB / REEHUB PLUS; Smart Travel; Via Dinarica:** Energy efficiency, cultural tourism and guide training.
- **Proposed GEP application: consider diverse participant needs and equitable access to training and project benefits.**

BIRD reports nine projects implemented since 2018 and a combined BIRD project budget of EUR 615,213.59 across TERRITORY (EUR 239,357.99), EVOLVE (EUR 270,855.60) and 5HELIX (EUR 105,000). These are project budgets, not an allocation for the GEP. Any GEP-specific resources must be separately approved.

Additional operational actions and evidence (proposed)

Action	Responsible function (proposed)	Timing	Evidence / indicator
Record participation in 5HELIX incubation and mentoring by gender, subject to privacy safeguards	Programme coordinators	2027–2028	Aggregate participation review and documented outreach adjustments
Screen EVOLVE and TERRITORY activities for gender-related barriers and stakeholder needs	Project managers	At activity design and annual review	Completed screening checklist and actions recorded
Use transparent criteria for training and mentoring opportunities	Training / programme teams	2027–2028	Published selection criteria and review notes
Review staff participation in training and project leadership by gender	GEP focal point and management	Annually	Aggregated internal dashboard; corrective actions where needed
Approve GEP-specific staff time and resources	Executive Director / management	At adoption	Signed appointment and recorded allocation