



# Gender Equality Plan 2025-2028

---

## Table of Contents

### Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
1. Executive Summary .....	3
2. Introduction.....	3
3. Organizational Commitment.....	4
4. Legal and Policy Framework.....	6
8. Capacity Building and Training .....	14
9. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting .....	15
10. Risk Management and Mitigation.....	16
11. Communication and Advocacy .....	18
12. Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement .....	20
13. Implementation Timeline.....	22
14. Conclusion .....	24

## 1. Executive Summary

Aegean Rebreath is committed to fostering a culture of gender equality within its organizational structure and programmatic activities to promote human rights and enhance the effectiveness of marine conservation efforts. This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) outlines Aegean Rebreath's comprehensive strategy to embed gender equality into its organizational culture, operational procedures and programmatic work. As an environmental organization working across coastal and marine ecosystems, Aegean Rebreath acknowledges that sustainable development and gender equality are inextricably linked.

The plan is aligned with the European Commission's gender equality strategy (2020–2025), Greek national policy and global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals. It aims to eliminate structural inequalities, increase women's participation in leadership, integrate gender into environmental programming and ensure inclusive communication and advocacy. The GEP is both a compliance framework and a transformative instrument that reflects the organization's values of equity, transparency, and inclusion.

Key focus areas include governance, staffing, training, monitoring and evaluation and public engagement. The plan includes specific steps, timelines, indicators and assigned responsibilities, making it a practical and living document that will evolve over time.

## 2. Introduction

Aegean Rebreath is a social enterprise based in Greece, committed to protecting marine biodiversity, promoting circular economy principles and enhancing civic engagement. As with many environmental challenges, marine pollution and climate change disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, particularly women and marginalized gender identities. Yet, these groups often remain underrepresented in decision-making and field operations within the environmental sector.

Gender equality is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of sustainable development. Systemic inequalities frequently limit women's participation in leadership roles and decision-making processes that shape environmental policies and projects. Recognizing this disparity, Aegean

Rebreath has developed this Gender Equality Plan to actively address and dismantle structural barriers. The organization commits to promoting equal opportunities for all genders, ensuring inclusive access to training and leadership and integrating gender-responsive principles into every aspect of its work—from underwater cleanups to national policy dialogue.

This plan is the product of internal assessment, staff consultation and engagement with national and European gender equality standards. It seeks to move beyond compliance and become a tool for cultural change and organizational excellence.

### **3. Organizational Commitment**

#### *Organizational Culture and Capacity Building*

##### Building a Gender-Equitable Organizational Culture

Creating a gender-equitable culture is foundational to the success of the Gender Equality Plan. A culture that embraces diversity and inclusion not only enhances employee well-being but also drives innovation, collaboration and organizational resilience. For Aegean Rebreath, this means cultivating an environment where all staff, regardless of gender identity, feel respected, empowered and able to contribute fully.

In 2025 women represented approximately 65% of the Aegean Rebreath workforce and occupied 35% of senior leadership and decision-making roles. At the same time, more than 50% of the volunteers participating in Aegean Rebreath missions are women. Further transformation requires intentional leadership, clear values and continuous engagement. Organizational culture influences daily interactions, decision-making processes, informal networks and the overall workplace atmosphere. Gender equality must become woven into the fabric of the organization's identity, reflected in behaviors, policies and practices.

##### Leadership Commitment and Role Modeling

Leadership commitment is critical in setting the tone for gender equality. Senior leaders at Aegean Rebreath must visibly champion the principles of equity and inclusion. This involves demonstrating personal accountability for gender equality

goals, communicating openly about the importance of gender equity in internal and external forums, allocating resources, incorporating gender equality objectives into leadership performance evaluations and engaging in ongoing learning and self-reflection on gender issues. Leadership role modeling helps dismantle resistance and fosters a culture where gender equality is normalized and valued.

### Capacity Building and Training

Capacity building ensures that all employees have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to contribute to a gender-equitable workplace. Aegean Rebreath will develop and implement comprehensive training programs covering gender awareness and sensitivity, anti-discrimination and harassment prevention, inclusive leadership and gender mainstreaming in program management. Training will be mandatory for all staff with refresher sessions and specialized modules will be available for leadership and human resources teams. The organization will also explore partnerships with gender equality experts and institutions to enhance training quality and relevance.

### Policy Review and Development

To reinforce cultural change, existing policies will be reviewed and revised to reflect gender equality commitments. New policies will be developed where gaps are identified. Key policy areas include recruitment and selection procedures with gender-sensitive criteria, performance appraisal systems that mitigate bias, work-life balance policies supporting flexible work and parental leave, reporting and disciplinary procedures for harassment and discrimination and pay equity and transparency guidelines.

Aegean Rebreath's institutional commitment is also demonstrated through the ongoing development and enhancement of its internal policies and procedures. This includes adopting inclusive recruitment and hiring practices, such as reviewing job descriptions to eliminate gender-biased language, ensuring gender-balanced selection panels and promoting gender diversity in all candidate shortlists. The organization has also updated its comprehensive code of conduct to incorporate gender-inclusive language, explicit anti-discrimination clauses and a zero-tolerance stance toward harassment, bullying, or stereotyping.

In addition, anti-harassment and reporting mechanisms will be strengthened with confidential and accessible tools, supported by clear investigation protocols and survivor-centered response strategies. Furthermore, fair performance evaluations will be prioritized, with promotion and recognition systems integrating equity metrics and addressing potential unconscious bias in the appraisal process.

#### Encouraging Inclusive Communication

Communication within the organization plays a vital role in shaping culture. Aegean Rebreath will promote inclusive language and communication practices that respect all gender identities. This includes using gender-neutral language in official documents, emails and meetings, highlighting gender equality successes and role models in newsletters and social media, providing accessible channels for feedback and dialogue on gender issues and celebrating international gender equality observances such as International Women's Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

## **4. Legal and Policy Framework**

### *International Legal and Policy Instruments*

Aegean Rebreath Gender Equality Plan is firmly anchored in internationally recognized legal and policy frameworks that affirm gender equality as a human right and a prerequisite for sustainable development. The organization acknowledges the guiding principles laid out by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, which serve as the foundation for the plan's objectives and strategies.

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** establishes the principle of non-discrimination and equality before the law, forming a moral and legal baseline for gender equality efforts. Building upon this, the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** is a comprehensive treaty that requires state parties, including Greece, to eliminate discrimination against women in all spheres, including employment, education and participation in public life. CEDAW's provisions explicitly mandate the adoption of temporary special measures to accelerate de facto equality where necessary.

Furthermore, the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)** remains one of the most influential global frameworks for advancing gender equality. It

identifies critical areas of concern such as women's empowerment, equal access to resources and the eradication of gender-based violence, which align closely with Aegean Rebreath objectives. The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, particularly **SDG 5**, commits all UN member states to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030. The interconnected nature of the SDGs highlights that gender equality is essential for effective environmental protection and sustainable resource management.

### *European Union Policy and Legislation*

As a member of the European Union, Greece and consequently Aegean Rebreath are bound by EU directives and policies that champion gender equality and non-discrimination. The **European Charter of Fundamental Rights** explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sex and guarantees equality between women and men in all areas, including employment and social protection.

The **EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025** outlines key priorities relevant to the organization's focus, such as closing the gender employment and pay gaps, promoting gender balance in leadership roles and addressing gender-based violence. The strategy promotes gender mainstreaming—the systematic integration of a gender perspective into all policy areas and programs—as a core principle.

Additionally, the **Directive 2006/54/EC** on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in employment and occupation mandates equal pay and equal treatment in working conditions, recruitment and career progression. This directive informs Aegean Rebreath human resources policies and pay equity initiatives.

### *National Legal Framework in Greece*

Greece has enacted legislation to promote gender equality and combat discrimination, reflecting its commitments under international and EU frameworks. Key laws include:

- **Law 3896/2010** on equal treatment regardless of racial or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation, which applies to gender equality in employment.
- **Law 4604/2019**, which strengthens protections against harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace, requiring organizations to implement preventive measures and establish complaint mechanisms.

- **Law 4808/2021** on gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence, emphasizing the responsibility of institutions to prevent and respond to discrimination and violence.

These laws create a robust legal environment within which Aegean Rebreath operates and must ensure compliance, while also adopting best practices that may exceed statutory requirements to foster a genuinely inclusive workplace.

## 5. Strategic Objectives and Actions

To ensure that gender equality is embedded in every facet of the organization, Aegean Rebreath has developed a series of strategic objectives that align with its mission and operational context. These objectives are grounded in the findings of the international best practices and the lived experiences of staff and stakeholders. Each objective is supported by targeted actions, measurable indicators and timelines to ensure effective implementation and monitoring.

### Objective A: Promote Equal Representation and Leadership Opportunities

Aegean Rebreath acknowledges that equal participation in decision-making processes is fundamental to achieving gender equality. This objective aims to eliminate the structural and cultural barriers that have historically hindered women and gender-diverse individuals from accessing leadership positions.

#### Key Actions:

- ✓ Set minimum representation targets (e.g., 50%) for women and gender-diverse staff in all leadership and coordination roles, including project leads and board committees.
- ✓ Create professional development pathways that explicitly target underrepresented groups, including training in leadership, negotiation, and strategic planning.

#### Expected Outcomes:

- ✓ Improved gender balance in leadership within 18–24 months.
- ✓ Stronger pipeline of future leaders from diverse gender backgrounds.
- ✓ Enhanced team collaboration and inclusive decision-making practices.



## Objective B: Ensure Gender-Responsive Human Resources Practices

Human resource policies and practices form the foundation of an inclusive organization. Aegean Rebreath is committed to developing and maintaining equitable HR systems that promote fairness in recruitment, compensation, retention, and career progression.

### Key Actions:

- ✓ Conduct a comprehensive review of all job descriptions to remove gender-biased language and introduce standardized inclusive language.
- ✓ Institutionalize gender-balanced recruitment panels and require justification when shortlists lack diversity.
- ✓ Offer flexible working arrangements and parental leave policies for all genders, reducing caregiving burdens traditionally borne by women.

### Expected Outcomes:

- ✓ Transparent, bias-free recruitment and promotion processes.
- ✓ A reduction in gender-based pay disparities across departments.
- ✓ Greater retention of employees from marginalized gender groups.

## Objective C: Prevent and Address Gender-Based Harassment and Discrimination

Ensuring a safe and respectful work environment is essential for the well-being and productivity of all employees. This objective focuses on building institutional mechanisms that protect against and respond to gender-based violence, harassment and other forms of discrimination.

### Key Actions:

- ✓ Further developing a comprehensive anti-harassment policy that includes definitions, procedures, protections, and consequences.
- ✓ Appoint a committee responsible for confidentially receiving complaints and initiating response protocols.
- ✓ Deliver mandatory, recurring training on workplace harassment, including bystander intervention, for all staff and volunteers.

#### Expected Outcomes:

- ✓ Increased trust in internal grievance mechanisms.
- ✓ Decrease in unreported incidents due to improved reporting systems.
- ✓ A work environment where all staff feel respected and protected.

#### Objective D: Build Gender Capacity Across the Organization

Aegean Rebreath recognizes that transforming organizational culture requires knowledge, reflection, and sustained capacity building. This objective centers on equipping staff with the understanding and tools they need to apply gender perspectives in their daily work.

#### Key Actions:

- ✓ Develop a gender training curriculum tailored to different roles (e.g., HR, project managers, field staff, volunteers).
- ✓ Conduct annual workshops, seminars, and peer-learning circles that foster a shared understanding of key concepts such as intersectionality, unconscious bias and gender mainstreaming.

#### Expected Outcomes:

- ✓ High levels of gender awareness across all staff levels.
- ✓ Increased integration of gender considerations into projects, reports and proposals.
- ✓ Strengthened capacity for self-reflection and inclusive practice.

#### Objective E: Mainstream Gender into Environmental Programs and Community Engagement

Gender equality is not only an internal issue—it must also inform how Aegean Rebreath interacts with the communities it serves. This objective ensures that the organization's marine conservation and environmental democracy programs reflect the needs, roles and knowledge of all genders.

#### Key Actions:

- ✓ Incorporate gender analysis into all program design and evaluation processes.
- ✓ Ensure that community consultation processes include equal participation of women and marginalized gender groups.
- ✓ Design communication materials that reflect diverse gender identities and challenge environmental gender stereotypes.
- ✓ Promote women-led environmental initiatives and local leadership through microgrants and visibility campaigns.

#### Expected Outcomes:

- ✓ Programs that are more inclusive, effective and responsive to diverse community needs.
- ✓ Greater empowerment of women and gender-diverse individuals in marine conservation efforts.
- ✓ Stronger community ownership and social sustainability of environmental programs.

#### Objective F: Institutionalize Gender-Sensitive Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Robust M&E systems are necessary for accountability and continuous improvement. This objective ensures that gender equality outcomes are tracked, analyzed and acted upon throughout the program and organizational lifecycle.

#### Key Actions:

- ✓ Develop gender-sensitive indicators for all strategic areas of the GEP.
- ✓ Disaggregate all M&E data by gender and other relevant social variables (age, disability, etc.).
- ✓ Facilitate participatory evaluation sessions where staff and stakeholders reflect on progress and challenges.

#### Expected Outcomes:

- ✓ Enhanced visibility of gender gaps and progress.
- ✓ Evidence-based improvements to GEP implementation.
- ✓ Organizational transparency and increased stakeholder trust.

## 6. Human Resources and Equal Opportunities

Human Resources (HR) stands at the heart of institutional transformation toward gender equality. At Aegean Rebreath, the HR function is not merely administrative but is seen as a strategic vehicle for embedding inclusive values into every aspect of organizational life. From the moment a candidate applies for a position to the point of retirement or exit, HR systems influence how equity, inclusion, dignity, and opportunity are experienced. This section outlines how Aegean Rebreath will leverage its HR policies and practices to foster a workplace where everyone—regardless of gender identity or expression—can thrive, contribute and lead.

In this context, the organization aims at developing procedures related to:

- A. Recruitment and Hiring Practices to ensure they are free from bias and promote gender diversity across all roles, particularly in leadership, technical and field-based positions where women and gender-diverse individuals are underrepresented.
- B. Onboarding and Staff Integration to affirm the organization's inclusive values from day one. New employees will receive an orientation packet that includes the Gender Equality Plan, the code of conduct and anti-harassment procedures.
- C. Promotion and Career Advancement to ensure that processes will be redesigned to be transparent, merit-based, and equitable.
- D. Retention and Support Systems that will allow to Aegean Rebreath to invest in supportive structures that enable all staff to balance professional growth with personal well-being.
- E. Anti-Harassment Policies and Reporting Mechanisms to create a workplace free of harassment, abuse or discrimination. Aegean Rebreath will adopt and enforce a zero-tolerance anti-harassment policy, rooted in survivor-centered principles and legal compliance.

## 7. Gender Mainstreaming in Programs

Aegean Rebreath understands that achieving gender equality requires not only internal institutional reform, but also the integration of gender perspectives into its **core mission areas**, particularly marine conservation, coastal community

engagement and environmental democracy initiatives. Gender equality and environmental sustainability are deeply interconnected: ecological crises disproportionately affect women and marginalized gender groups, while environmental restoration efforts are often shaped by gendered access to knowledge, resources, and decision-making power.

Therefore, gender will be systematically embedded as a **cross-cutting priority** in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all programs. This ensures that Aegean Rebreath external impact does not inadvertently reinforce gender disparities, but instead fosters equity, empowerment and inclusive environmental action.

In this context, every project should begin with a **gender analysis**, a structured process for understanding how gender roles, relations, and dynamics influence the environmental context and the specific issue being addressed. The analysis will be founded on community consultations with men, women, and gender-diverse individuals and stakeholder mapping to understand who holds power and who may be excluded from environmental decision-making. The gender analysis will inform the **project's logic framework**, helping identify barriers to participation, opportunities for empowerment, and risks of unintended harm (such as reinforcing existing inequalities).

Whether Aegean Rebreath is organizing holistic activities in island communities, it is essential that **community participation reflects gender balance**. To address this imbalance, Aegean Rebreath will work with local leaders to **actively encourage the involvement of women**, especially in communities where their public engagement may be constrained by social norms. Moreover, Aegean Rebreath recognizes that participation alone is not enough: it must be **meaningful**. Women and marginalized individuals will be supported not just to attend, but to speak, lead, and shape decisions about marine resource management.

In order to understand and improve the gender impact of its programs, Aegean Rebreath will adopt **gender-sensitive indicators** within its Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems. These indicators will not only track numerical parity—such as the percentage of female participants—but also explore qualitative dimensions such as changes in participants' knowledge, confidence, or leadership capacity, community attitudes toward gender roles in environmental stewardship and perceived fairness in benefit distribution from conservation efforts.

Local women's groups, grassroots cooperatives, and gender equality advocates are often deeply embedded in coastal communities and have intimate knowledge of local dynamics. Aegean Rebreath will **actively seek partnerships** with such actors, treating them not merely as beneficiaries but as equal collaborators in environmental programming. Such synergies may include co-designed community projects with women's cooperatives and joint advocacy campaigns to raise awareness of gender-environment issues, such as the gendered impacts of pollution or climate change.

Many field activities in marine conservation require adjustments to ensure that women—and others with limited free time due to caregiving or household labor—can participate fully. Women in many coastal communities bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid work, making it difficult for them to join cleanup campaigns, workshops, or decision-making forums scheduled during peak caregiving hours. By making **structural and cultural adaptations**, the organization ensures that gender inclusion goes beyond rhetoric to become operational and measurable.

Aegean Rebreath, therefore, commits to viewing **marine conservation through a gender lens**, acknowledging the diverse roles that different genders play in ocean stewardship, coastal resilience and environmental innovation. By doing so, the organization seeks to advance both **ecological integrity and human equity**, building a blue future that leaves no one behind.

## 8. Capacity Building and Training

Building a gender-equitable organization requires more than policies or structural adjustments—it demands a profound cultural shift. For such a shift to be authentic and sustainable, it must be supported by widespread understanding, critical reflection, and behavioral change across every layer of Aegean Rebreath. As such, **training and capacity building** form a central pillar of the organization's Gender Equality Plan. This section outlines the strategic approach Aegean Rebreath will adopt to develop and deliver comprehensive training programs that strengthen the capacity of staff, volunteers, leadership and partners to recognize, question, and transform gender-based inequities—both within the workplace and in the field.

The purpose of the training program is not merely to raise awareness but to equip participants with practical tools to apply gender analysis in their daily work, build leadership competencies in gender-responsive planning, budgeting, and

evaluation, empower all individuals within the organization to act as agents of change.

A **structured training framework** will be rolled out across all departments and levels of responsibility. The curriculum will be modular, sequenced and responsive to evolving needs and field realities. Furthermore, all employees will be trained on Aegean Rebreath's GEP, Code of Conduct, Harassment reporting protocols and survivor-centered approaches.

Field staff, community engagement coordinators and volunteers often serve as the face of Aegean Rebreath in public and community settings. They are uniquely positioned to influence community norms and facilitate inclusive participation. As such, they will receive **contextualized, hands-on training** focused on strategies for identifying and addressing local gender barriers to environmental participation, managing conflict or resistance to gender-focused interventions in community settings, while ensuring that field activities accommodate diverse needs in terms of safety, accessibility, and scheduling.

Training will not be treated as a one-time obligation but as an **ongoing, evolving process**. The following schedule will be implemented. **Annual refresher sessions** will be organized for all staff to revisit key concepts and engage with new tools or updates, while **thematic deep-dives** will be offered quarterly on emerging topics (e.g., gender and climate adaptation, LGBTIQ+ inclusion in environmental work, feminist leadership models).

By making capacity building a strategic priority and embedding gender learning throughout the organization's ecosystem, Aegean Rebreath will create a culture where equity is not just a goal but a habit. Empowered with the tools, awareness, and commitment to act, its people will become champions of a more inclusive and just environmental movement—one that restores both the seas and the social fabric that binds us to them.

## 9. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) serve as the backbone of accountability in Aegean Rebreath Gender Equality Plan (GEP). Without rigorous tracking, reflection, and course correction, even the most well-intentioned equality strategies can fall short of their transformative potential. The organization is therefore committed to developing and maintaining a **dedicated,**

**gender-responsive MEL framework** that not only measures outcomes, but also encourages adaptive learning, critical inquiry and inclusive participation.

The MEL system will ensure that all components of the Gender Equality Plan are actively monitored, evaluated for effectiveness and regularly revised based on findings. This system will also play a pivotal role in ensuring that gender equality is treated not as a parallel agenda, but as a fundamental dimension of organizational success.

The development and implementation of the gender MEL framework will be guided by the participation, transparency, accountability and learning oriented principles. Aegean Rebreath is expected to implement a structured MEL system consisting of four core components such as **Gender-Disaggregated Data Collection, Performance Indicators for Each Strategic Objective, Staff Feedback and Culture Tracking Mechanisms, Coordination and Responsibility**. The creation of a comprehensive, gender-responsive MEL system affirms Aegean Rebreath commitment not just to progress, but to **measurable, meaningful and evidence-based progress**. Through regular monitoring, critical evaluation and an organizational culture of inquiry, the Gender Equality Plan will remain a living, evolving instrument—capable of adapting to complexity, responding to feedback and driving genuine transformation.

## **10. Risk Management and Mitigation**

The implementation of a comprehensive Gender Equality Plan (GEP) within Aegean Rebreath, while transformative and necessary, is not without potential obstacles. As with any organizational change process, especially one that intersects with long-standing societal norms and institutional cultures, it is essential to anticipate risks, plan mitigation strategies and build resilience into the system from the outset. This section outlines the key risks anticipated during the rollout of the Gender Equality Plan and the proactive strategies that will be implemented to mitigate these challenges. The intention is not only to prevent setbacks but to foster a culture that embraces growth through reflection, dialogue and continuous adaptation.

One of the most significant risks in embedding gender equality within any organization is internal resistance—both overt and covert. Staff and leadership



may perceive gender equality initiatives as irrelevant, disruptive to existing power dynamics or overly burdensome on already stretched resources. Resistance may stem from unconscious bias, fear of change or simply lack of awareness about gender dynamics in environmental work.

To address this, Aegean Rebreath will adopt a multi-pronged approach focused on communication, leadership modeling and inclusive dialogue. Senior leadership will play a central role by publicly and consistently reinforcing the organizational commitment to gender equality.

Moreover, internal meetings are foreseen for open dialogue, where staff can ask questions, express discomfort or concerns and receive thoughtful responses. These sessions will not be punitive but constructive, encouraging engagement rather than compliance.

Another key risk is the insufficient allocation of financial, human and time resources to implement the GEP effectively. Gender equality work is often deprioritized when budgets are tight or it is treated as an 'add-on' rather than a fundamental requirement. Without dedicated resources, even the best-formulated plans can stagnate.

To sustain engagement, Aegean Rebreath will highlight and celebrate milestones, small wins and personal stories of transformation across the organization. Success stories from field staff, community members and internal teams will be documented and shared through newsletters meetings and social media, reinforcing the positive impact of gender equality work.

In many organizations staff may lack prior experience or training in gender analysis, inclusive facilitation, or policy development. Without proper support, there is a risk that implementation will be shallow.

To address this, the organization will invest in ongoing capacity building, as outlined in the Training and Capacity Building section. This includes foundational training for all staff, specialized workshops for leaders and field staff, guidance and support departments as they integrate gender considerations into their work.

Beyond internal risks, there is a possibility that external stakeholders—such as local partners, donors, or community leaders—may not immediately support or

understand the importance of integrating gender equality into environmental work. The organization will leverage its relationships with donors and partners to ensure gender equality is seen as an asset, not a liability.

The path to institutionalizing gender equality is complex and often contested. Yet, by identifying risks early and developing thoughtful, participatory and adaptive mitigation strategies, Aegean Rebreath can remain resilient and focused on its goals. In treating risk management not as a defensive mechanism but as a tool for foresight, innovation and shared responsibility, the organization positions itself not just to manage risk—but to lead through it.

## **11. Communication and Advocacy**

Effective communication is a cornerstone of successful gender equality initiatives. At Aegean Rebreath, internal and external communication efforts will be carefully designed and implemented to reflect, reinforce and amplify gender-inclusive values across all levels of the organization and its public presence. This strategic approach to communication is critical not only to raise awareness and foster understanding of gender issues, but also to transform organizational culture and influence public perceptions around gender and environmental stewardship.

### *Internal Communication*

Within the organization, communication channels will be leveraged to create an environment where gender equality is visible, valued and actively supported. This involves embedding gender-sensitive language and imagery in all official documents, newsletters, internal presentations, and digital communications. By normalizing inclusive language and portraying diverse gender identities and roles, Aegean Rebreath aims to challenge unconscious biases and promote respect among staff and leadership.

To avoid reinforcing stereotypes, all visual and written materials will be reviewed and adapted through a gender lens. For example, images depicting marine conservation work will represent women, men and gender-diverse individuals in a variety of roles—scientific, leadership, fieldwork, and community engagement—thereby demonstrating that environmental stewardship is a collective responsibility, not confined to traditional gender roles.

Regular internal communications will highlight milestones in the Gender Equality Plan's implementation, share stories of change from staff and beneficiaries and invite ongoing dialogue..

### *External Communication*

Externally, Aegean Rebreath's communication will reinforce its commitment to gender equality while educating and inspiring broader audiences. Messaging will aim to dismantle harmful stereotypes, highlight the contributions of underrepresented groups and position gender equity as integral to environmental sustainability.

All external communications—from press releases to social media campaigns—will be crafted to embody these values. This includes the deliberate use of inclusive language, the featuring of diverse voices and the presentation of nuanced narratives that showcase intersectionality—the ways in which gender intersects with ethnicity, age, disability and other social identities.

By framing gender equality as essential to the success of marine conservation efforts, these communications will help build broader societal support and encourage partnerships rooted in shared values of equity and inclusion.

### *Key Actions in the Communication Strategy*

To realize these ambitions, several specific initiatives and resources will be developed. Amplifying the visibility of women leaders within Aegean Rebreath and the broader marine conservation community is a powerful way to inspire change and challenge gender norms. The communication team will develop profiles, interviews, and feature articles showcasing women scientists, activists, field workers and decision-makers. These stories will not only celebrate achievements but also candidly address challenges faced by women in the sector, fostering solidarity and encouraging systemic change. Media releases and social media posts will strategically align with international observances such as International Women's Day and World Oceans Day to maximize reach and impact.

### *Running Campaigns Focused on Inclusive Environmentalism*

The organization will design and implement public awareness campaigns that emphasize the interconnectedness of gender equality and environmental health. These campaigns will be crafted with input from gender experts, local

communities and communication professionals to ensure cultural relevance and resonance. Multi-platform approaches—including videos, podcasts, infographics, and community events—will be employed to engage diverse audiences effectively.

#### *Translating Key Materials for Broader Accessibility*

To ensure accessibility and inclusivity, all critical gender equality communication materials will be translated into relevant local and regional languages. This will enable Aegean Rebreath to reach a wider audience, including marginalized or underrepresented groups who may otherwise be excluded due to language barriers.

This approach extends beyond language to include accessible formats such as easy-to-read versions, audio materials for visually impaired individuals and digital accessibility considerations for online content.

## **12. Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement**

The successful advancement of gender equality within Aegean Rebreath depends significantly on the organization's ability to build, nurture and leverage strategic partnerships. These partnerships enable the exchange of expertise, resources and innovative practices, amplifying the impact of gender mainstreaming efforts and fostering systemic change within the environmental conservation sector and beyond.

Recognizing that gender equality is a complex social issue that intersects with environmental, cultural, economic and political dimensions, Aegean Rebreath will actively seek collaborations with a diverse array of stakeholders whose mandates and expertise complement its mission.

#### *Women-Led Environmental Organizations*

Partnerships with women-led environmental organizations are a cornerstone of the strategic alliance framework. These organizations, often at the forefront of community-driven conservation and social justice work, bring invaluable grassroots knowledge, lived experience and a gender-transformative approach to environmental stewardship.

Collaborating with such organizations will allow Aegean Rebreath to co-create programs that center women's voices, enhance local leadership and address gendered barriers to resource access and decision-making. These partnerships may include joint advocacy campaigns, capacity-building workshops and shared field projects that showcase how gender equality and environmental health are interlinked.

#### *Academic Institutions with Gender Expertise*

Academic partnerships provide critical opportunities for research, evaluation and the development of evidence-based gender policies. Aegean Rebreath will collaborate with universities and research centers specializing in gender studies, environmental science and social anthropology to deepen understanding of the gender dimensions of marine conservation.

Such partnerships will facilitate the co-development of rigorous gender analyses, impact assessments and participatory research methodologies. Joint research initiatives can explore topics such as women's traditional ecological knowledge, gendered impacts of marine pollution, or barriers to women's participation in marine science.

#### *Municipal Gender Equality Councils*

Local government bodies, particularly municipal gender equality councils, are pivotal actors in shaping policies and allocating resources at the community level. Aegean Rebreath through its role within the Blue Municipalities Network can align its gender equality objectives with broader municipal and regional development plans.

This collaboration opens avenues for influencing local policy frameworks to incorporate gender-sensitive marine and environmental policies. Joint initiatives may include community consultations, gender-sensitive urban planning related to coastal zones and capacity-building for municipal staff on gender and environmental governance.

#### *Funders That Prioritize Inclusive Programming*

Securing funding aligned with gender equality goals is essential to sustain and scale Aegean Rebreath initiatives. Strategic engagement with donors and funding bodies that prioritize inclusive programming allows the organization to access

resources specifically dedicated to gender mainstreaming, women's empowerment and intersectional inclusion.

Aegean Rebreath will cultivate relationships with these funders through transparent communication of its gender equality commitments, rigorous reporting on gender outcomes and collaborative program design. Funding partners may include international development agencies; philanthropic foundations focused on gender and environment as well as innovative social impact investors.

#### *Joint Initiatives, Shared Learning and Collaborative Research*

Building upon these partnerships, Aegean Rebreath will pursue **joint initiatives** that integrate gender equality into marine conservation projects and programs. These initiatives will be co-designed to ensure alignment of goals, sharing of responsibilities and mutual benefit.

Examples include community-based participatory action research, co-hosted workshops on gender and biodiversity and multi-organizational campaigns addressing the intersection of gender, climate change and ocean health. Collaborative efforts will prioritize inclusivity, ensuring representation of diverse gender identities, ages and cultural backgrounds.

### **13. Implementation Timeline**

The effective realization of Aegean Rebreath Gender Equality Plan (GEP) requires a clear, structured and phased implementation timeline paired with a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. This ensures not only systematic progress but also the flexibility to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities over time.

The GEP is designed to be rolled out over a **three-year period spanning from 2025 to 2028**. This timeframe balances the urgency of embedding gender equality within organizational practices with the realistic pacing necessary for sustainable cultural and operational transformation. The phased approach also allows for continuous learning and refinement, enhancing the plan's relevance and impact.

---

### Year 1 (2025): Foundations and Institutionalization

The initial year focuses on laying a solid groundwork through comprehensive gender diagnostics, policy formulation and institutional arrangements.

The process begins with an organization-wide assessment. This assessment will employ qualitative and quantitative methods, including staff surveys, focus groups, policy reviews and data analysis, to assess the current gender dynamics, identify barriers to equality and map existing strengths and gaps within Aegean Rebreath.

Based on assessment findings, the organization will develop or update its Gender Equality Policy and related guidelines. This policy will articulate the organization's commitment, principles and specific goals regarding gender equality, serving as a formal framework guiding all subsequent actions.

The policy development process will be participatory, involving consultations with diverse staff members, partners and gender experts to ensure inclusiveness and relevance. The policy will also align with international gender equality standards and best practices.

---

### Year 2 (2026): Capacity Building and Mainstreaming

The second year emphasizes building organizational capacity and embedding gender considerations into core programs and processes.

Comprehensive training programs will be delivered to all staff, tailored to roles and levels. These trainings will cover key gender concepts, unconscious bias, inclusive communication, gender-responsive project design and monitoring tools.

Gender equality will be integrated systematically into programmatic work. This involves conducting gender analyses during project planning, ensuring gender-sensitive indicators in monitoring frameworks and adjusting activities to address identified gender gaps.

To track progress effectively, a gender-responsive baseline M&E system will be established. This system will collect sex-disaggregated data and qualitative insights aligned with the plan's objectives and indicators.

---

### Year 3 (2027): Review, Adjustment, and Reporting

The third year is dedicated to reflection, learning and adaptation to ensure continuous improvement and accountability.

A comprehensive review of the GEP's implementation will be conducted, analyzing quantitative data, qualitative feedback and case studies. This review will assess progress against targets, identify challenges and successes and solicit input from staff, partners and beneficiaries.

Based on review findings, the plan will be refined to address gaps, incorporate new insights and respond to evolving organizational and contextual realities. This iterative approach ensures the plan remains relevant, feasible and impactful.

## 14. Conclusion

### *Advancing Gender Equality as a Catalyst for Transformation*

This Gender Equality Plan represents more than a policy framework—it marks a bold and strategic shift in the organizational identity of Aegean Rebreath. In recognizing that **gender equality is not peripheral to sustainability but foundational**, the organization affirms its role not only as an environmental leader but as a force for inclusive social transformation.

Aegean Rebreath is uniquely positioned at the intersection of environmental protection and civic engagement. Yet, no environmental action can be fully effective unless it is informed by the principles of justice, equity and participation. Gender equality must be viewed as a **structural necessity**: not simply as a question of fairness, but as a prerequisite for resilience, innovation and community legitimacy. Just as marine ecosystems rely on balance and diversity, so too must our institutions reflect the multiplicity of voices, experiences and identities within society.

This plan lays out a roadmap toward **transformative change**—not superficial adjustments, but deep cultural and systemic shifts. It calls for the rethinking of traditional power dynamics, the intentional redistribution of opportunity and the enhancement of internal processes. It is both a challenge and an opportunity to model what a just, inclusive and future-oriented environmental organization should be.



Through sustained investment in staff capacity, the cultivation of an inclusive workplace culture and the rigorous mainstreaming of gender in all operations, Aegean Rebreath takes responsibility for walking the talk. It is not enough to express values in statements; those values must be embodied in **recruitment, leadership, field engagement, data systems and everyday decisions**. Embedding gender equality in the DNA of the organization makes its operations more ethical, its projects more effective, and its influence more credible.

This plan also acknowledges that the journey toward equality is not linear. It is a **long-term, iterative process**—one that requires humility, learning and adaptation. Every action taken—whether it is mentoring a colleague, questioning a biased process or amplifying a marginalized voice—contributes to the broader architecture of equality.

Furthermore, the Gender Equality Plan aligns Aegean Rebreath with a growing global movement of civil society organizations, NGOs, academic institutions and governments that are embracing intersectional, inclusive and participatory approaches. By joining this momentum, the organization not only complies with national and European standards but also positions itself at the forefront of a paradigm shift—one in which environmental sustainability and social justice are no longer seen as parallel goals but as mutually reinforcing imperatives.

To remain accountable, Aegean Rebreath will continually **assess, report and recalibrate**. Mechanisms such as biannual reviews, participatory evaluations and transparent public reporting will help ensure that commitments translate into action. The organization will listen—deeply and consistently—to staff, community members and partners, especially those whose voices have too often been overlooked.