



Estonian Registry #80646101 ✉ PIC 8817233405

[www.BalticLivingLab.org](http://www.BalticLivingLab.org)

## Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

The Baltic Living Lab convenes the multiple helix of the Baltic Sea Region for problem-solving experimentation towards creating a connected Baltic community, strengthened by an enhanced network of stakeholders, to address emerging challenges. Our activities are aimed at cultivating Blue Literacy (directed toward the health and well-being of all Earth's water systems) by empowering learners of all ages, catalysts within communities, and educators across the Baltic Sea region to co-create real-world solutions for our shared aquatic ecosystems. Through open-schooling methodologies, citizen science, and cross-sector collaboration, we bridge education, research, policy, and the Blue Economy — activating the multiple helix of society to drive evidence-based policy, nurture collective leadership, and bring meaningful, sustainable change to marine and freshwater environments and effectively combatting “hydrosphere blindness” - referring to the systemic neglect or underappreciation of water in research, policy, education, and environmental governance. Hydrosphere Blindness is a term used to describe how water-related systems are:

- Treated as background elements rather than central actors in ecological and climate systems.
- Fragmented across disciplines (e.g., freshwater vs. marine, inland vs. coastal).
- Often excluded or poorly integrated in climate policy, land-use planning, and sustainability frameworks.

Key Aspects of Hydrosphere Blindness include a lack of systems thinking, where learners of all ages fail to see how water connects and sustains ecosystems, economies, and societies. There is a disconnection between land and water management where soil policies and ocean policies are often siloed. There is also under-representation in climate adaptation, as water is a primary medium through which climate change is felt (e.g., floods, droughts), yet is sidelined in many strategies.

Overcoming hydrosphere blindness is crucial for advancing climate resilience and sustainable development, as well as managing the soil–water nexus, especially in agriculture, urban planning, and coastal ecosystems. The Baltic Living Lab supports integrated education approaches like Blue Literacy and systemic environmental learning. Our Gender Equity Plan is an official institutional commitment by Baltic Living Lab and is publicly available via our website at [www.balticlivinglab.org](http://www.balticlivinglab.org). It is reviewed annually and updated as needed.

### **1. Dedicated Resources**

Baltic Living Lab has appointed a Gender and Inclusion Focal Point to oversee implementation of the GEP and ensure gender balance in project teams, advisory groups, and Living Lab activities. This role will be supported by administrative and data collection staff.

### **2. Data Collection and Monitoring**

Baltic Living Lab commits to:

- Collecting and analyzing sex-disaggregated data on staff composition, recruitment, participation in Living Lab activities, and stakeholder engagement.
- Conducting annual internal reviews to assess progress on gender balance and equality.
- Using inclusive indicators to track gender representation in training, citizen science initiatives, and co-design events.
- Provide annual gender-awareness and unconscious bias training for staff and affiliated Third Parties.
- Integrate gender and diversity perspectives into the design of all citizen science, environmental monitoring, and educational programs.
- Promote flexible working arrangements and respectful, inclusive collaboration environments.
- Ensure zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, or exclusion based on gender or identity.

### **3. Integration of Gender in Research and Innovation Content**

Baltic Living Lab attempts to embed Open and Responsible Research and Innovation (ORRI) principles across its activities, ensuring that gender equality is not only a structural priority but also a core element of inclusive knowledge production and governance. This means that our co-creation processes are guided by transparency, inclusiveness, responsiveness, and reflexivity. Gender perspectives are integrated from the earliest stages of project design through to dissemination and impact assessment. We actively involve diverse stakeholders — including women, youth, and underrepresented groups — in shaping research questions, methodologies, and

educational tools, particularly in citizen science and Blue Literacy initiatives. This approach ensures that our gender equality objectives are aligned with broader efforts to make research and innovation more democratic, ethical, and impactful for society at large. Thus,

- Baltic Living Lab projects will attempt to include gender analysis where relevant — particularly in relation to stakeholder engagement, digital inclusion, and environmental justice.
- Co-creation processes will intentionally include underrepresented and gender-diverse groups, especially youth and community members in rural and coastal regions.

This GEP will be reviewed annually and informed by stakeholder feedback. Baltic Living Lab will also seek external partnerships and expertise to deepen our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion across all projects and initiatives.

Reviewed and revised on 10 January 2025