

D7.5. Gender Action Plan and Ethics considerations



Reinventing High-performance pOwer converters for heavy-Duty electric trAnSport

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This deliverable focuses on monitoring gender balance within the consortium and describes the actions to be taken to ensure gender equality and ethical performance throughout the project.

Relevant background on the gender perspective and the ethical considerations included in the Grant Agreement and the European Recommendations are presented. In more detail, the gender balance in the RHODaS consortium and future actions to ensure gender equality throughout the RHODaS project are also presented, as well as the ethical principles to apply in RHODaS research and development.

This deliverable will therefore outline the need and importance of promoting gender balance and equality transversely and how ethics considerations are fulfilled throughout the project planning and implementation to stand out as an excellent example of a well-balanced working community.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENT AND PURSUE

The purpose of this deliverable is to report on the gender aspects of the project and provide a framework for addressing the various ethical issues related to researchers involved in the development, design, implementation, and testing of the prototypes developed in the project. The coordinating partner, UPC, is the responsible for implementing, monitoring, and reporting on the RHODaS gender and ethical equality strategy, and all partners have been encouraged to implement processes and practices related to gender including compliance. Relevant background information about gender perspectives from different points or frameworks, including the specifications included in the Grant Agreement and the European Recommendations, are presented. More in detail, gender balance in the RHODaS consortium, future actions to ensure gender equality, and monitoring of women and men along the RHODaS project, as well as support staff in achieving a sustainable work-life balance, are presented. This deliverable will therefore describe the need and importance of promoting gender balance and equality transversely and how ethical considerations are fulfilled throughout the project planning and implementation to stand out as an excellent example of a well-balanced working community.

1.2 WPS AND TASKS RELATED WITH THE DELIVERABLE

This deliverable refers to Task 7.5 “Ensuring the integration of the gender dimension and other ethical aspects”, which runs from M1 to M42 and is included in WP7: Project Management and Coordination.

2. GENDER AND ETHICS ACTIONS IN HORIZON EUROPE

The EU Gender Equality Strategy delivers on the von der Leyen Commission's commitment to achieving a Union of Equality. The strategy presents policy objectives and actions to make significant progress by 2025 towards a gender-equal Europe. The goal is a Union where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our European society.

On the other hand, ethics is an integral part of research from the beginning to the end, and ethical compliance is seen as pivotal to achieve real research excellence. On this extent, scientific integrity is a recognized condition for quality work in international frameworks, and therefore promotion of integrity and deterring of misconduct within all the components of research and development of a project are key drivers for ensuring its social and technical excellence.

In the following, a review of the Gender Actions Plans and Ethics considerations along Europe Research Area (ERA) is presented.

2.1. GENDER PLANS IN EUROPEAN RESEARCH

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union¹ and the fifth UN's sustainable development goal (SDG). Gender equality is a core value of the EU, a fundamental right² and a key principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights³. In addition, gender equality brings more jobs and greater productivity⁴, a potential that must be carried out as green and digital transitions are adopted and demographic challenges face.

Whilst there has been progress toward gender equality in R&I in Europe through a range of EU, national and institutional policies and measures, there is still work to be done⁵. Although women are close to reaching gender parity among doctoral studies (48% in EU27, 2018), they are still under-represented in technical professions (25% in STEM and ICT technologies, in EU27, 2018). Moreover, women are significantly under-represented among inventors: only 10,7% of inventors were women in the period 2015-2018 in EU27, based on European Patents applications).

Since 2012, gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research have been one of the priorities in achieving the Europe Research Area (ERA). Proposed actions within the ERA priority 4 on gender equality centre on three main areas: (i) promoting gender equality in careers, (ii) ensuring gender balance in decision-making and (iii) integrating the gender dimension in R&I content and programmes (European Commission, 2012).

¹ As it is defined in the Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/treaty/tfeu_2012/oj

² This right is mentioned in Articles 2 and 3(3) TEU, Articles 8, 10, 19 and 157 TFEU and Articles 21 and 23 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf.

⁴ By 2050, improving gender equality would lead to an increase in the EU's GDP per capita by 6.1% to 9.6%, which amounts to €1.95 to €3.15 trillion: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/economic-and-financial-affairs/economic-benefits-gender-equality>.

⁵ Complete discussion can be found in document European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, She figures 2021: tracking progress on the path towards gender equality in research and innovation, Publications Office, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/602295>. https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-publications-tools-and-data/publications/all-publications/she-figures-2021_en

The **Gender Equality Strategy 2020 – 2025** [1] frames the European Commission's work on gender equality and sets out the policy objectives and key actions for the 2020-2025 period, which in summary, are:

1. Having a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in place is a requirement for the participation of public bodies, research organizations and higher education establishments in European Framework Programmes (Eligibility criterion).

2. The integration of the gender dimension into research and innovation content, which is a requirement by default and an award criterion evaluated under the excellence criterion (Award criteria).

3. Increasing gender balance throughout the programme, with a target of 50% women in Horizon Europe related boards, expert groups, and evaluation committees. Also, a gender balance among research teams set is a ranking criterion for proposals with the same score (Ranking criteria).

Each partner institution involved in RHODaS customizes the Gender Equality Strategy and provides a different policy and organizational structure in terms of gender equality and participation in consortia and teams. Therefore, the RHODaS consortium must promote gender equality and non-discrimination by focusing on issues related to equal opportunities and treatment for all women and men throughout the project and preventing any type of discrimination and especially gender discrimination.

2.2. ETHICS ACTIONS IN EUROPEAN RESEARCH

Ethical issues have to be an integral part of research from beginning to end, and ethical compliance is mandatory to research, innovation, scientific and technological activities carried out under Horizon Europe funding.

Ethical research conduct implies the application of fundamental ethical principles and legislation to scientific research in all possible domains of research, including the adherence to the highest standards of research integrity for research and innovation (R&I) as described in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity [2].

As an institution in a member state, the RHODaS Coordinator, UPC, bases its values and principles on those of the European Union (EU). Article 2 of the EU Treaty⁶ states that the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the member states in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. Guiding principles regarding ethics in Horizon Europe are described in

- Article 19 - Regulation (EU) 2021/695 establishing Horizon Europe:
 - o 'Actions carried out under the Programme shall comply with ethical principles and relevant Union, national and international legislation, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention on Human Rights and its Supplementary Protocols.'

⁶ Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union (26-10-2012), latest version being the Lisbon Treaty that entered into force on 1 December 2009.

- Article 14 - Model Grant Agreement (MGA):
 - o 'The action must be carried out in line with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles.'
 - o 'The beneficiaries must commit to and ensure the respect of basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities).'

On this basis, UPC approved the Code of Ethics of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya on 22 February 2022 [3], which defines the set of values and principles that serve to inspire and motivate the good practice of UPC staff and students in the performance of their activities. In this regard, the RHODaS Project adheres to these fundamental principles of research integrity, which in summary are the reliability to ensure the quality of research, including the analysis and the use of resources, the honesty in developing, reviewing and communicating the research in a transparent, fair, full and unbiased way, the respect for research colleagues, general society, ecosystems and the environment, and the accountability for the research in all of its phases, including its wider impacts.

Under these principles, RHODaS is committed to complying with the fundamental values and rights, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, pluralism, solidarity, integrity and non-discrimination, explicitly described in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union [4] which brings together the most important personal rights and freedoms enjoyed by EU citizens in a legally binding document, which entered into force in December 2009 along with the Treaty of Lisbon.

3. GENDER DISTRIBUTION IN RHODaS PROJECT

RHODaS aims to develop disruptive topologies of power converters using new semiconductor materials and cutting-edge technologies to improve architecture efficiency, power density, reliability, cost, and sustainability for a complete e-axis applicable to electric drivetrains of 1200V for zero emissions heavy goods vehicles (over 3,500kgs). In addition, considerations of ecodesign and circularity will also be addressed, creating compact solutions that can be integrated into a wide range of heavy-duty vehicles. RHODaS consortium is composed of 9 public and private partner institutions from 6 European member countries.

As required in Horizon Europe funding, research institutes and universities of the Consortium, which are the 44% of the partnership, have a gender policy in place:

- Austrian Institute of Technology, AIT,
(https://www.ait.ac.at/fileadmin/cmc/downloads/New_Career/Gleichstellungsplan/AIT_Gender_Equality_Plan_V1.0_web.pdf)
- Aarhus University,
(https://medarbejdere.au.dk/fileadmin/ingen_mappe_valgt/14_Action_plan_for_gender_equality_at_Aarhus_University_2020-2022.PDF)

- Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya,
(<https://rdi.upc.edu/ca/el-centre/igualtat-de-generes/upc-4th-equality-plan-2022-2026.pdf/>)
- Technical University of Vienna, Gender Equality Plans (GEP 3.0),
(https://www.tuwien.at/fileadmin/Assets/tuwien/TU_fuer_alle/AKG/Career_Advancement_Plan_for_Women_at_TU_Wien_2017.pdf;)
(https://www.tuwien.at/fileadmin/Assets/tuwien/TU_fuer_alle/AKG/Equal_Opportunities_Plan_2017_final.pdf)

An overview of the gender action plans in place shows that they focus primarily on the recruitment process, including gender-neutral and inclusive language, intending to increase the number of female scientists employed in professional and managerial positions, in the offer of neutral career development to guarantee that the requirements do not include any direct or indirect discrimination, in the promotion of internships for young students and researchers, in the support for the formation of internal and external networks of women, in the training of employees directly involved in gender policy, and in the directors of the institute and the university to raise awareness on the subject as well.

Looking at the composition of the RHODaS team in terms of gender participation, women are directly involved in all institutions, with a percentage in general over 25%, and a total average in all the project of almost 30%. Although, 50% of these women are involved in management and administration activities, and not directly in technical or research work. On the contrary, the percentage of men participating in management and administration activities does not arrive at 23%. Moreover, and considering only technical and research activities, almost 80% of the people involved in the project are men.

Therefore, it can be concluded that in this project:

- Considering all the roles, the women percentage achieves almost 30%
- Considering administrative and managerial roles, women and men are practically balanced
- However, considering only technical roles, the women percentage drops to 21%

Next tables and figures show graphically these distributions.

Table 1. Men and women participants involved in RHODaS consortium. Total numbers and by partner.

TOTALS	UPC	KNEIA	TUW	AU	AIT	BOSMAL	VAL- EMB	VAL-eA	NVISION	TOTAL
Total people	10	3	5	6	19	4	8	4	3	62
Total women	4	2	1	0	5	1	3	1	1	18

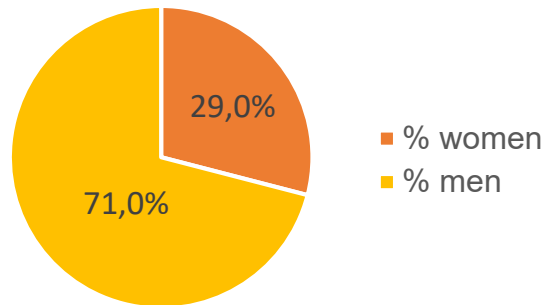


Figure 1. Total men and women participant in RHODaS Consortium.

Table 2. Women technicians and researchers participating in the RHODaS project. Total numbers and by member

TOTALS	UPC	KNEIA	TUW	AU	AIT	BOSMAL	VAL-EMB	VAL-eA	NVISION	TOTAL
Total technicians	6	2	3	4	16	1	7	2	2	43
Total women	2	1	0	0	3	0	3	0	0	9

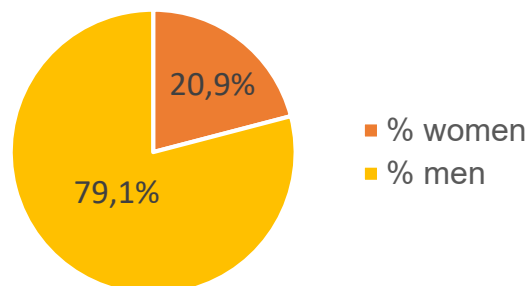


Figure 2. Total women participant in RHODaS project as technicians and/or researchers.

Table 3. Administrative and managerial women participating in the RHODaS consortium. Total numbers and by member.

TOTALS	UPC	KNEIA	TUW	AU	AIT	BOSMAL	VAL-EMB	VAL-eA	NVISION	TOTAL
Total adm/mgtm	4	1	2	2	3	3	1	2	1	19
Total women	2	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	9

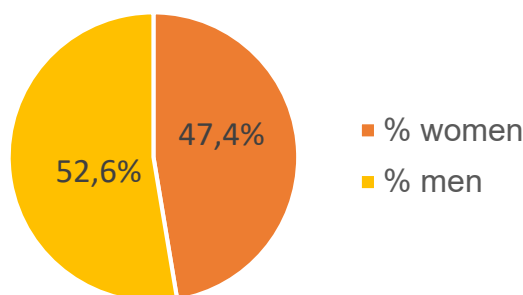


Figure 3. Total women participant in RHODaS project in administration and/or managerial tasks.

It should be pointed out that these numbers are aligned with the current state of women's representation in the tech industry⁷. As per the latest data, women hold 26.7% of tech-related jobs (globally, women account for 47.7% of the global workforce). Notably, compared to entry-level roles, roles higher up in the org chart (like CTOs or heads of engineering) have even lower representation of women.

In conclusion, the representation of women in the technology industry remains low, and the RHODaS consortium maintains the average percentage. However, the latest studies and surveys indicate that companies practising pay equity reviews, unbiased hiring practices, and skill-based promotions tend to hire and retain women's talent at a higher rate.

Therefore, to help to ensure the project's success, the RHODaS consortium has to promote gender equality and address gender inequalities along all the project activities.

4. GENDER PRINCIPLES IN RHODaS

RHODaS Project investigates, develops, and verifies a new concept of electric power train for heavy-duty long-haul vehicles, including new approaches for power electronics, electric motors, thermal cooling, and digital system for sustainable solutions. To this extent, the gender dimension that can impact the project's results has been evaluated without foreseeing major requirements.

Despite the findings of the project are not foreseen to affect women and men differently and all the outputs are expected to be non-gendered, RHODaS partners emphasise the

⁷ Complete information can be found in "74+ Shocking Women In Tech Statistics (2022)". Josh Howarth, August 15, 2022. <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/women-in-tech>

importance of taking an inclusive and participatory approach to address gender inequalities.

Nevertheless, the Consortium will incorporate sex and gender analysis into its research and innovation content (particularly where these might have adverse effects) and management activities to ensure that the sex and gender dimensions are properly considered thereby removing potential barriers to adoption and take-up. The Coordinator, UPC, has a protocol for the prevention of sexual harassment, and an Ethical Committee which has a representative responsible for Gender and diversity affairs. A Board of directors has signed a commitment to gender equality. Furthermore, UPC implement actions that promote the use of female talent and female embrace networks, and it has endorsed the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct.

Apart from the application of proposals and recommendations taken from the partners' Gender Equality Plans and particular gender policies, RHODaS consortium defines its own gender actions to ensure avoiding inequalities and gender discriminations along the Project. For example, Scientific & Technical Committee, as well as the Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Management will ensure that system user interfaces or published documents (i.e., scientific papers, white papers, etc.) do not contain any assumptions or biases concerning sex and/or gender.

These actions, which define a Gender Action Plan of the RHODaS Consortium, will be periodically reviewed and discussed at the PEB, and are the following:

1. development of family-friendly policies. For instance, the use of teleconferencing will be strongly promoted to minimize the need for travelling for both men and women
2. the work under flexible working hours will be promoted to reconcile work and private life of participants. Moreover, internal meetings will be planned during core working hours. Also, RHODaS project is committed to avoid late meetings and weekends meetings
3. promotion of a gender-balanced participation at internal meetings and workshops and events, as well as at external conferences and exhibitions, including GA.
4. all the documentation, deliverables, reports, publications, and dissemination should avoid the suggestion that the research findings apply only to men
5. careful design of user interfaces in web pages and digital twin tools to eliminate any potential gender bias that may appear from the design stage. Also, carefully observing gender in language use
6. develop gender competence and tackling unconscious gender bias among staff, leaders, and decision-makers,
7. Report and follow up of gender balancing in research tasks and project results dissemination. COO has to ensure balanced representation of females/males in all images used in dissemination material and to regard ethical considerations.
8. Setup and upgrade of quantitative statistics on gender participation, as a tool for the tracking of gender balancing along the project. The participation and progress of gender balance within the consortium will be monitored and documented on an annual basis

The implementation of this Action Plan is performed in task T7.5 throughout the project. Moreover, this task ensures that the research experiments and activities are thoughtfully planned and conducted with respect to the highest ethical and legal standards, e.g., respect for data privacy and protection, ethical use of new technology and prevention of misuse, elimination of gender bias in the development of user interfaces, etc.

5. ETHICS PRINCIPLES IN RHODaS

High ethics standards add to the quality of research and increase its social impact, promoting its better alignment with social needs and expectations. Ethics is closely connected with the partnership's duties and responsibilities towards other individuals and society as a whole. Moral values and principles that are often referred to in ethics include individual rights and freedoms, such as autonomy, human dignity, bodily integrity, privacy and property, benefits such as welfare, happiness, friendship and trust, protection against bodily harms, property injuries and environmental damage, fairness principles, such as justice, equality, inclusion and non-discrimination, and principles concerning good human character features that people should strive for like honesty, tolerance, integrity, diligence, and respectfulness.

Ethics assessment of innovation enables the characterisation of the ethical dimensions of new technologies and applications, allowing researchers to make informed decisions about which technologies to promote, which to discourage and how to develop and distribute them in just and ecologically sensitive ways.

In this regard, research ethics codes such as honesty, objectivity, integrity, carefulness, openness, respect for intellectual property and personal data, non-discrimination, competence, legality, and social responsibility are key drivers in developing research collaborative public founded projects, such as RHODaS. Ethical standards also help to promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness.

Ethics issues were considered and analysed during RHODaS preparation (Article 14 "Ethics and Values" of the GA and Section 4 "Ethics Self-Assessment" in Administrative Forms). From such analysis, it was concluded that there are no specific issues to address regarding the ethical dimension of the objectives, methodology and likely impact and compliance with ethical principles and relevant legislations. That is, the RHODaS project will not raise ethical issues, apart from some minor issues arising from the data collection, which will be handled and protected, if applicable, as described in the Data Management Plan, (RHODaS Deliverable D7.3).

Additionally, RHODaS also acknowledges that pursuant to the Grant Agreement, the beneficiaries must act in compliance with:

- a) ethical principles defined in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, avoiding any research misconduct, and
- b) all applicable international, EU and national legislation

The coordinator will promote awareness and ensure a prevailing culture of research integrity throughout the whole Project by

- Promoting the application of ethical, legal and safety provisions along the Project to all the researchers, reducing potential harms and risks relating to the research.
- Fostering the senior researchers and WPs leaders to mentor their team members and offer specific guidance and training to properly develop, design and structure their research activity,
- Designing, carrying out, analysing and documenting research in a careful and well-considered manner, making a proper and conscientious use of research funds
- Informing the partners of the outset on the goals of the research and on the process for communicating making the research as transparently and openly as possible, including information and consults about submissions for publication of the research results.

- Ensuring access to data as open as possible, as closed as necessary, and where appropriate in line with the FAIR Principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable) for data management.
- Publishing results and interpretations of research in an open, honest, transparent, and accurate manner
- Encouraging the partners to support proper infrastructure for the management and protection of data and research materials in all their forms, which are necessary for reproducibility, traceability and accountability

Although the data processing foreseen by RHODaS does not involve sensitive personal data, genetic information neither tracking nor observation of participants, in order to assure the effective protection of data collected for the RHODaS activities, the project partners must comply with the EU Data Protection and Privacy legal framework and in specific with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), as stated in PROPOSAL_101056896-RHODaS-HORIZON-CL5-2021-D5-01-PART_B_Section_1, paragraph 1.2.7 "Open Science": "GDPR compliance: The Data Manager and the Project Coordinator will ensure the full compliance with the GDPR General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679). All data collected by the project will be considered compliant after giving data subjects full details on the experiments to be conducted, and after obtaining signed informed consent forms. All project datasets will be made anonymous at the time of their publication in the website repository, in order to assure privacy regarding the origins of the data. The procedure to grant the privacy in such way, will be directly through the elimination of the columns in the database that refer to patient credentials".

Although the project will avoid collecting personal data for the activities that will be carried out (for example, full name, contact details, background), if this is strictly necessary, the applicable national legislation will also be strictly followed, such as the Spanish LOPD.

6. CONCLUSION

The RHODaS consortium is committed to advancing gender equality and promoting good practices on gender roles and ethical issues involving all partners. This Deliverable review the Gender Action Plans and ethical considerations in the European Research Area (ERA) and presents the specific Gender Action Plan and ethical considerations of the project, which have been integrated into all elements of it. All institutions involved in the RHODaS project pay particular attention to gender issues and in order to promote women's participation have implemented a set of norms to increase their involvement in technical and managerial activities, providing facilities to face work-life balance problems.

Although RHODaS does not take directly into account gender issues in terms of research topics, it heeds gender dynamics both in practice - composition of the consortium - and in theory - gender issues in work packages. In fact, on the one hand, each partner has directly involved women in the project realization. Even if most women are in charge of administrative tasks, some are also in the research teams as experienced researchers.

Both gender equality and research ethics are an ongoing concern, both within the consortium and the wider community of interest and will be monitored and tracked throughout the project to assess achievements in gender equality and ethical performance, and produce robust results and comparable conclusions throughout the project.

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