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# EUROPEAN FORUM FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

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Connecting People to Restore Just Relations

## EFRJ Gender Equality Policy

April 2026

### 1. OUR COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY

The Board of the European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ) is deeply committed to advancing gender equality both within our governance structures and across all areas of EFRJ's work. We recognise that discrimination, unequal power relations, and systemic barriers continue to shape the lives of women, girls, and gender-diverse people, preventing them from fully exercising their rights and fulfilling their potential. We also understand these barriers to be intersectional and affect women differently, depending on their class, race, and background, creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

We commit therefore to advancing gender justice by challenging the root causes of inequality and transforming the systems that sustain them. This means ensuring equal opportunities, promoting women's participation at all levels, and creating safe, respectful environments where sexism, discrimination, and abuse are not tolerated, and when they take place that structures and processes are in place to address them. We see gender equality as not as an add on to the rest of the work we do but as a fundamental human right and therefore as essential to achieving social change, including transforming the ways our societies respond to crime, harm and wrongdoing. This commitment is all the more important given the increasing backlash that gender equality faces under rising authoritarianism and democratic backsliding worldwide.

Our organisation strives at all levels – secretariat, board, and membership – to create an environment in which everyone has equal opportunities to participate and contribute. This commitment is reflected in our policies, decision-making processes, and the way we design and implement our events, projects, and our everyday activities. We actively promote an inclusive work environment, support diverse voices, and work to identify and address structural barriers that limit participation and opportunity. By embedding gender equality into our values, practices, and policies, we aim to ensure that our organisation contributes meaningfully to a more just and equitable society.

## 2. LANGUAGE STATEMENT

**Gender** The socially-constructed differences between men and women, as distinct from 'sex', which refers to their biological differences – in line with the definition of 'gender' in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025

**Intersectionality** A methodology of studying the overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination. Disadvantages as a result of intersectional discrimination can be associated with someone's race, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age.

**Gender Equality** Is when people of all genders have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Everyone is affected by gender inequality – women, men, trans and gender diverse people, children and families. It impacts people of all ages and backgrounds.

## 3. KEY CONCEPTS

EFRJ seeks to be inclusive of all employees, volunteers and members. In this document, the use of the words 'our' and 'we' refers to all employees. We recognise that gender categories should not be limited to the male-female binary and must include trans and gender diverse people, and people who do not identify with any gender.

In this document, references to 'woman/women' or 'man/men' refers to female or male identifying people; this includes transgender people, cisgender people, and others who identify themselves within the spectrum of the gender identity of woman or man. This document also uses the term 'gender diverse people', who may identify as non-binary, trans, agender, genderqueer, genderfluid or with any other term.

The term 'LGBTIQ+' refers to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex or queer. Throughout this document the term 'workforce diversity' is used to describe employees from varied cultural backgrounds and ages, LGBTIQ+ employees, young and old, and employees with disabilities.

## 4. EFRJ PURPOSE

The EFRJ is an international network organisation connecting members active in the field of restorative justice, such as practitioners, academics and policy makers throughout Europe and beyond. We promote research, policy and practice development so that every person may have access to high quality restorative justice services, at any time and in any case. Our main focus is on the application of restorative justice to criminal matters but we focus on other areas too, such as family, school and community issues.

## 5. THE CASE FOR A GENDER EQUALITY POLICY

Gender inequality affects people of all genders. Women experience inequality in many aspects of their lives. They tend to undertake a larger share of the domestic work, caring responsibilities, and experience higher levels of family violence. In the workplace, women are often compounded by additional barriers to employment opportunities, promotion and career progression, pay inequality, and experience sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace more often than men.

Men often carry stereotypical expectations in regards to their strength, emotional and mental resilience and are less likely to take a lead role in caring responsibilities of a household.

Trans and gender diverse people are more susceptible to discrimination and social exclusion, and may feel a need to hide their identity at work for fear of how they are perceived. They often feel unseen, unsafe and unsupported.

Other forms of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender diversity, sexual orientation, disability, and age can also impact people's experience of gender equality and negatively impact them in the workplace.

In 2023 the EFRJ commissioned an external expert to conduct an external gender audit. The audit report recommends that the EFRJ strengthen its approach to gender mainstreaming by developing clear policies, training, and accountability measures, while embedding gender and inclusion across all activities. It also emphasizes improving internal practices – such as staff support, reporting mechanisms for harassment, paid internships, and inclusive workplace policies – alongside appointing a diversity focal point and fostering staff capacity through regular training.

Externally, the organisation should build partnerships with women's and inclusion-focused groups, expand its work on gender-based violence (including advocacy), and ensure gender balance and sensitivity in governance, research, and events.

Following up on the recommendations, the gender policy sets out the organisational approach and commitments required to embed gender transformative practices and ways of working across all our work. This includes:

- how we recruit and nurture staff
- in our organisational culture, behaviours and ways of working
- in our programmes and projects to achieve our change ambitions
- in our communications and engagement with others

## 6. EFRJ/OUR COMMITMENT

EFRJ is committed to upholding the gender equality principles, with reference to the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030 and has considered their impact in the development of our strategies and measures. Strategies that promote better gender equality benefit our members and the people they serve. We aim to improve by

- Explicitly including the ambition and set targets to grow workstreams which address gender inequality
- Monitoring and adjusting all existing and new workstreams to ensure gender equality is considered
- Building trust so that people can disclose aspects of their personal identity without fear
- Increasing awareness internally and externally of the importance of addressing gender equality
- Implementing support mechanisms that address gender stereotypes
- Continue using gender-sensitive language throughout all documents and publications
- Maintaining the Working group on Gender-based violence to advance restorative justice in this area
- Committing to a balanced gender representation among event speakers and trainers
- Enabling employees, volunteers, Board Members and membership to understand how to recognise, report and address discriminatory and disrespectful behaviours
- Strengthening and reporting on data collection (staff, members, projects, events etc) across the organisation about gender and intersecting identities
- Reporting to membership and publicly on our actions and their impact.

With a better understanding of and reporting on our demographics through data collection, monitoring and evaluation we will uphold our commitment to gender equality.

ROLE	RESPONSIBLE
Strategic Lead	Assigned board member: TBC
Responsible person for implementation	Director
Date of Policy	Agreed by Board on (forthcoming)
	Adopted by Membership on (forthcoming)
Review date	1 <sup>st</sup> semester 2030