

## NATIONAL SPORTS ACADEMY “VASIL LEVSKI” – SOFIA

### GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2025 – 2030

*“Gender equality is the foundation for a stronger Europe. The 2024 Index shows that progress is possible, but we will only sustain it with bold, sustainable action.”*

**Carlien Scheele, EIGE’s Director<sup>1</sup>**

1. Assessment of the current state of gender equality. Key data.

#### National context

The principles of equality and non-discrimination based on gender are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, in a number of sectoral and special laws. On December 30, 2021, Bulgaria officially adopted the National Strategy for the Promotion of Equality between Women and Men 2021-2030 (a continuation of the efforts of the previous strategy with the same title and scope 2016-2020). The Strategy was prepared by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. In addition to the Strategy, a National Action Plan for Equality between Women and Men was adopted. The Strategy and the Plan consist of five main priority areas: Equality of women and men in the labor market and ensuring an equal level of economic independence; Reducing the gender pay gap and reducing income disparities; Promoting equality between women and men in decision-making processes; Combating violence against women and supporting victims; Overcoming gender-based gender stereotypes in various spheres of public life and combating sexism. The National Strategy for the Promotion of Equality between Women and Men 2021-2030 is the main policy document in the field of gender equality and gender mainstreaming. This initiative is based on the strategy of the same name, in force from 2016-2020, with reviews of the progress made being carried out by an inter-agency working group. The principle of equality between women and men is monitored through data collected as part of the annual report of the National Strategy, the National Statistical Institute (NSI) and periodic reports through mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of international legal instruments applicable in Bulgaria.

A 2023 study by the European Institute for Gender Equality shows that Bulgaria managed to climb from 25th to 16th position in the EU on the Gender Equality Index<sup>2</sup>. However, Bulgaria lags significantly behind in terms of equality in management and supervisory boards in Bulgaria. In them, the ratio between women and men is 19% to 81%. For comparison, the European average is 33% to 67%, again in favor of men. The inactive participation of women at all levels of the labor market leads to economic and social losses. Despite the implementation of a number of measures in national programs, data from the National Statistical Institute on the employment rate for 2024 show that for women it is much lower - 47.6%, while for men it is 59.4%<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality

<sup>2</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/country/BG>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/content/4009/>

There is also a difference in pay in certain sectors. The state policy of Bulgaria continues to stimulate employers who open flexible jobs for single parents or adoptive parents with children up to 5 years of age. These are part of the measures that are implemented at the national level. The creation of a network of specialized services for adults and children, victims of violence, which are accessible to all victims, is one of the commitments undertaken by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) within the framework of the National Strategy. The data currently show, however, that in 11 districts there is no operational Crisis Center, in 21 districts there is no Crisis Center for adults, and in 13 districts there is no Crisis Center for children. The operational centers are for 321 places<sup>4</sup>.

#### Sectoral context (higher education and science)

The first National Strategy for Promoting Equality between Women and Men 2016-2020 was adopted by the Council of Ministers in November 2016. It creates a framework where it does not specifically mention research and innovation. It seeks to ensure equal treatment, equal access to public resources and equal participation in decision-making for women and men, to promote successful personal and social fulfilment and to promote equality between women and men in all spheres of public, economic and political life. The strategy includes objectives, priority areas and performance indicators. It is implemented through annual national action plans, which are mainly aimed at implementing a unified policy for equality between women and men, raising awareness of the importance of gender equality and overcoming gender stereotypes. In this context, Bulgaria has not yet introduced the requirements for a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) at the national academic level. At the end of 2023, three Bulgarian universities developed GEPs within the framework of the Horizon 2020 project - Support and Implementation of Gender Equality Plans in Academia and Research, 2019-2023<sup>5</sup>.

From 2022, a key eligibility criterion for Horizon Europe program research funding is the existence of a gender equality plan in higher education institutions. This requirement has motivated a significant number of higher education institutions to address gender equality issues and to create institutional documents presenting a gender equality strategy (GEP).

The regulatory framework of higher education institutions in Bulgaria, until the introduction of the Horizon Europe requirement, did not contain a specific provision on gender equality. The regulatory acts of higher education institutions are based on the position of the national prohibition of discrimination on any grounds, including gender, enshrined in the Higher Education Act (1995, last updated 2024). This prohibition of discrimination in the basic Higher Education Act is repeated in some of the acts of higher education institutions, but without a system and without being linked to an institutional policy and strategic position.

Higher education institutions in the country, following EU policies in the field of education, science and research, perceive gender equality in higher education as a factor for increasing the potential

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/>

<sup>5</sup> The University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski"; Burgas Free University; University of Ruse "Angel Kanchev"

of European research and innovation by attracting more and more talented researchers and creating conditions in which they can maximize their potential.

The EC's research equality measures and statistical progress reports have so far only covered data on men and women, i.e. to the collection of binary data. The same approach is used by Bulgarian legislation on gender equality, including in the research, education and sports sectors (Law on Equality between Women and Men in Bulgaria, 2016). Again, in accordance with the European and national regulations, the term horizontal and vertical segregation has entered the Bulgarian legal language. This term determines the significance of observations not only by professional sectors and other profiling categories, but also in terms of women's career growth and occupying leadership positions. It is precisely vertical segregation that is one of the identified problems of gender equality in science, scientific research and sports management.

Gender equality in higher education is monitored at the national level by two institutions: the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the National Statistical Institute. The strong feminization of the educational profession in recent decades is visible at the level of higher education, and hence also in science and research. The share of women with a professional bachelor's degree is 59%, a bachelor's degree is 58.7%, a master's degree is 62.4%, and women with a doctoral degree are 53% (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2021)<sup>6</sup>.

In Bulgaria, a 16.5% gender pay gap is reported in "professional activities and scientific research" and 9.3% in the "education" group (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2021)<sup>7</sup>.

The existence of differences in the picture and trends in Bulgarian higher education and science compared to the European general data requires that these differences taken into account when preparing gender equality plans. However, the categorical position of the governing bodies of higher education and science in Bulgaria is that universities and scientific institutions must have developed gender equality plans as a contribution to the national policy of the country.

With regard to sports education and science, which is one of the fields of higher education, it should be noted that there is no specific strategic document in the sports system regarding measures for equality among athletes and sports management.

## 2. *National Sports Academy – regulatory framework, practices and trends for ensuring gender equality; needs analysis.*

The overall activity of the National Sports Academy regarding the equality of men and women is guided by Article 4 of the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Bulgaria, which states "*Art. 4. In higher education, privileges and restrictions related to age, race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, social origin, political views and religion are not allowed, except for cases explicitly specified in the*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mlsp.government.bg/eng/equality-policy>

<sup>7</sup> Id.

*Regulations for the activities of the higher school in accordance with the specifics of the training and the future profession."*<sup>8</sup>

In institutional terms, the following legislative acts regulate educational, administrative and management activities. Some of them explicitly include clauses on non-discrimination based on gender, among other grounds such as age, social origin, political affiliation, etc. In 2025, in order to ensure the sustainability of the academy's gender equality policy, an assessment of the regulatory framework from the perspective of gender equality was carried out<sup>9</sup>.

The regulatory framework of the National Sports Academy includes 61 acts, including regulations - 28, strategies - 4, codes - 2, internal rules - 8, rules - 5, regulations - 7, system - 1, policies - 2, procedures - 3, manual - 1. All of them relate to ensuring compatibility of the activities at the academy with the national regulatory framework in the field of higher education and science and create visibility of institutional development policies in these areas.

Of all 61 regulatory acts, from those related to **educational activities** at the National Sports Academy, only one document contains a regulation on gender equality<sup>10</sup>:

- Regulations of the National Sports Academy "Vasil Levski" for the recognition of higher education and completed periods of study obtained in foreign higher education institutions - *Art. 3. In the recognition of acquired higher education and completed periods of study in foreign higher education institutions, discrimination is not allowed on the grounds of age, gender, race, disability, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national, ethnic or social origin, belonging to a national minority, property, ancestry or other status or on the basis of any circumstance not related to the education for which recognition is requested.*

**Scientific research** is regulated by the Law on the Promotion of Scientific Research and the National Strategy for the Development of Scientific Research in the Republic of Bulgaria. Both documents do not contain texts related to gender equality. This omission is also reflected in the regulatory documents related to science and research at the institutional level. The acts related to scientific research at the National Sports Academy are the following, with a clear presence or absence of texts related to gender equality:

- Code of Ethics – Section 2, item 4 - *The Code opposes discrimination in the academic community based on differences in gender, religion and beliefs, national and racial affiliation, social and material status, age.*

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.neaa.government.bg/images/Legislation/Law/higher\\_education\\_act07.24.pdf](https://www.neaa.government.bg/images/Legislation/Law/higher_education_act07.24.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> The assessment of the legal framework at the National Sports Academy from the perspective of gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence was carried out through the initiatives and within the framework of the SUPPORTER project with registration number 101094529-SUPPORTER-HORIZON WIDERA-2022-ERA-1, under the EU Horizon Europe programme. The project aims to support eight sports higher education institutions from Central and Eastern Europe in developing their own intersectional, innovative, inclusive and impactful Gender Equality Plans, explicitly addressing gender-based violence and sexual harassment. Building on the state-of-the-art knowledge and expertise of advanced gender equality institutions, SUPPORTER is jointly creating an innovative capacity-building and mutual learning programme, providing support and mentoring for the development of the 4I-GEP (4I – Innovative Approach for Introducing the Aspects of Innovation, Intersectionality, Inclusiveness, Impact).

<sup>10</sup> Information from the NSA legal department processed for the purposes of the SUPPORTER project, 2025

- Rules/regulations for non-discrimination and gender equality in the implementation of scientific research activities at the National Sports Academy<sup>11</sup>.

**The career development** of the academic staff is carried out according to procedures defined by the Academic Staff Development Act, which defines scientometric indicators for development in degrees and positions, minimum national requirements and other specific requirements for procedures for occupying positions with a view to public benefit. The law lacks explicit text that refers to guaranteeing gender equality, which is assumed by presumption. However, the following text is included in the relevant institutional regulation of the National Sports Academy:

- Regulations for the acquisition of the scientific degree "Doctor of Science" and for holding academic positions at the Vasil Levski National Sports Academy – *“Art. 38 (2) All persons who meet the legally defined conditions and procedure for holding them have access to academic positions at the National Academy of Sciences, without restrictions and discrimination in terms of nationality, ethnicity, social affiliation and gender.”*<sup>12</sup>

The National Sports Academy carries out its activities in the field of appointment, promotion, management and termination of contracts of employees through the Labor Code and regulations for the implementation of the activities of the Human Resources Department. Of the three main regulatory documents regarding the procedures related to the management of academic and non-academic staff, one contains a regulation related to gender equality:

- Regulations on the internal work order of the National Sports Academy "Vasil Levski" - art. 44, (17) *“To protect the dignity of teachers and employees during the performance of their work duties and does not allow direct or indirect discrimination, privileges or restrictions based on nationality, origin, gender, race, skin color, age, political and religious beliefs”*. Art. 117, item 2 *“Carrying out activities that violate the constitutional rights of members of the academic community related to race, nationality, ethnicity, origin, religion, belief, political affiliation and others, in accordance with the provisions of the current legislation.”*<sup>13</sup>

Regardless of whether or not the normative documents of the National Assembly contain explicit texts ordering the non-admission of gender discrimination, when conducting procedures, concluding contracts, administering human resources, etc., the national policy for the non-admission of gender discrimination is present as an implicit rule.

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<sup>11</sup> The document was also drafted in connection with the implementation of the SUPPORTER project as an initial stage in the development of the gender equality theme. The rules are considered a starting point in the development of a strategic identification of themes and measures in the aspect of gender equality. However, the document covers only academic activities in science and research, which is only part of the general institutional policy on gender equality. Within the framework of the project and through the implementation of the activities under SUPPORTER-HORIZON WIDERA-2022-ERA-1, the understanding of the responsibilities of each academic institution towards respecting gender rights in all areas of institutional life was significantly expanded.

<sup>12</sup> Information from the NSA legal department processed for the purposes of the SUPPORTER project, 2025

<sup>13</sup> Id.

However, taking into account the trends of the European Union for active actions to ensure gender equality<sup>14</sup>, the inclusion of explicit texts on gender equality in regulatory acts in the National Education System is considered a necessary upcoming task, which will categorically declare institutional support for the efforts of the European Union to create a space for gender equality, including in the system of higher education, scientific research and sports.

A special place for expressing the policy of the NSA in the field of gender equality is occupied by the control body - the Academic Ethics Commission<sup>15</sup>. The members of the commission are tasked with accepting information related to compliance with ethical norms, including non-admission of gender discrimination, establishing the actual circumstances and reporting to the Rector for processing the information. As an essential stage in ensuring gender equality in 2024, by Decision of the Academic Council, the composition of the Commission was expanded from 3 members - only men - to 5 with the inclusion of two female lecturers, who underwent appropriate training on women's rights and emphasizing their inclusion in scientific and educational activities. The procedures for communicating cases of violation of gender equality were also specified.

Other main activities implemented in the 2024-2025 preparation period to declare a comprehensive system of measures in the field of gender equality refer to a survey conducted with analysis and conclusions among lecturers, administrative staff and students to identify strengths and weaknesses in the understanding of the surveyed groups on the topic; inclusion of gender equality topics in several academic disciplines; organizing discussions with representatives of the academy's management; discussions held with members of the Student Council; organized events to raise awareness with internal and external stakeholders/institutions; contacts were established with external institutions that complement the system for violated gender rights (relevant police bodies); a stable information practice was established to track the status and trends of the ratio of men:women in the academy; a manual was developed for observing non-discriminatory language in academic relations, etc.

The main challenges facing the National Sports Academy in ensuring gender equality in academic and sports contexts are<sup>16</sup>:

- Insufficient awareness among the academic and non-academic staff regarding the scope of the needed respect gender equality;
- Taking into account gender equality when selecting and occupying leadership positions in the academy with adequate comments on the gender ratio in the management of the sports system;

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<sup>14</sup> And as an impact of the training activities of the SUPPORTER project under the HORIZON WIDERA - 2022 program for familiarization with the initiatives, documents and statistical data on inequality and gender-based violence in the field of scientific research and sport.

<sup>15</sup> In 2024 and 2025, within the framework of the SUPPORTER project, a number of measures were implemented that created a favorable environment for further development and sustainability of the gender equality policy at the National Sports Academy.

<sup>16</sup> The challenges were taken into account at the time of drafting this Gender Equality Plan, taking into account the results of the discussions and training sessions held within the SUPPORTER project.

- Insufficiently coordinated inclusion of the topic of "gender equality in sport" in student training programs, taking into account progress in students' value positions;
- Insufficiently precise system for receiving and responding to signals related to violence (physical, psychological, etc.) in working conditions, interpersonal relationships and sports practices;
- Lack of a coordinated system for the use of data on human resources, procedures related to them, the introduction of innovative measures, reporting of weaknesses and specific needs in relation to ensuring gender equality;
- Lack of a uniform standard regarding the use of inclusive and gender sensitive language in regulatory documents, as well as in communication (written and oral);
- Lack of a legally established criterion regarding gender balance in the internal quality assessment system.

### 3. Identifying key internal and external support and interaction bodies

This Gender Equality Plan provides for objectives, activities and measures mainly within the scope of the National Sports Academy. In order to achieve the objectives of the Plan and to contribute to the national strategic documents for gender equality, it is necessary to establish sustainable cooperation with responsible representatives of various units outside the National Sports Academy, as well as to specify the tasks and responsibilities within the institution itself.

Internal responsible units:

- The leadership of the National Sports Academy in the person of the Rector and the Rector's Council
- Vice-Rector with responsibilities for competitions and selection for academic positions
- Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs with responsibilities for the adoption of curricula
- Head of the study affairs department
- Head of Human Resources
- Legal advisor to the academy
- Head of Public Relations Office
- Chairperson and members of the Academic Ethics Committee
- Chairperson of the Student Council and the appointed responsible members.

External institutions and responsible representatives:

- Ministry of Labor and Social Policy – contribution to reports, analyses and policies in the field of gender equality
- Ministry of Education and Science – contribution to updating education and research policies in line with attracting more women into science and ensuring gender equality

- Ministry of Youth and Sports – collaboration for the development of research and practical measures for non-violence against women in sports and gender equality in the management of sports programs and activities
- Agency for People with Disabilities – Overcoming Cross-Sexual Stereotypes Regarding Women with Disabilities in Sports
- National Statistical Institute – provision and exchange of data related to gender equality and updating of the Gender Equality Plan
- National and sectoral media.

#### 4. Resources – data, trends and challenges

At the National Sports Academy, the resources that are subject to the implementation and development of this Gender Equality Plan are human, material and informational.

##### *Human resources -*

The academic staff of the NSA<sup>17</sup> in 2024 consists of 265 people, of whom 124 are women and 141 are men. The ratio of professors is 13 (women) to 21 (men). This imbalance changes significantly when tracking the lower academic positions: associate professor 52:59 (women:men), chief assistant 32:42, assistant 17:13. The number of administrative staff is 259 people, of whom 156 are women and 103 are men. The academic management bodies include 20 women and 25 men, and the administrative management consists of 10 women and 11 men. Of the total number of employees in the NSA - 533 people with proven long-term health disorders are 57, of which 36 women and 21 men. There are no cases of use by men (0) of the leave for childcare regulated by law. All data show stability for the last five years, with a slight, but gradual increase in the number of women among young researchers and lecturers. The Academy has a sufficient number of lecturers who are relevant to gender equality issues and are willing to develop and officially include topics of equality and inadmissibility. The necessary administrative staff are also available, who will provide data and documentary and structural support for the activities.

##### *Material resources -*

The National Sports Academy has sufficient and modern infrastructure that will ensure the holding of meetings, conference events, audio and video recordings, presentation devices and equipment for administering activities and maintaining an appropriate archive. The Academy has the ability to provide sufficient material resources for the implementation of activities at the expense of the institutional budget.

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<sup>17</sup> The data regarding HR are provided by the Human resources office for the purposes of SUPPORTER project

### *Information resources –*

These resources include existing databases and systems: NSA has databases containing information on academic and administrative staff, as well as on students. These data can be used to analyze gender equality trends and monitor the progress of the strategy. It is also possible to use external databases to be used for comparative analysis with other higher education institutions. The NSA website can be used to disseminate information on the gender equality strategy, as well as to publish research and analysis results. Accessible resources are also a dedicated section on the site that contains: information on the strategy and its objectives; statistical data and analysis; information on events and initiatives related to gender equality. For the purposes of information NSA uses social media and other communication channels to raise awareness on gender equality issues.

### 5. Goals of the Gender Equality Plan

This Gender Equality Plan sets the following **main objective (MO)**:

*MO - Creating a common understanding of the activities and sustainability of gender equality outcomes at the National Sports Academy in line with national and European gender equality policy, especially in the field of sport and sports education.*

To achieve this goal, the following **specific objectives (SOs)** are set:

*SO 1. Priority creation of conditions for equal inclusion of genders at all levels of activity and management in sport and sports education (inclusive)*

*SO 2. Implementing innovations in the system of measures to achieve comprehensive and sustainable gender equality (innovative)*

*SO 3. Creating a system of measures to simultaneously counteract parallel discriminatory practices, one of which is based on gender (intersectional)*

*SO 4. Sustainable maintenance of activities, monitoring of impact and updating of all positive achievements in the field of gender equality in the NSA (impactful)*

### 6. Measures to ensure the achievement of the objectives – Action Plan

SO 1. Priority creation of conditions for equal inclusion of genders at all levels of activity and management in sport and sports education (inclusive)

Measure	Period of implementation	Responsible unit	Resources	Expected results
Raising awareness of the academic community about gender equality aspects and issues by yearly conference events dedicated to the GE	Oct. 2025 – Dec.2030	Public Relations Department of the National Sports Academy	Use of rooms and publication facilities for creating digital and paper information materials, as well as facilities for organizing events with internal and external representation	Attracted a greater number of faculty and staff who affirm the idea of gender equality and confidently promote key achievements at institutional, national and international levels
Integrate the idea of gender equality among the principles of justice, human dignity, non-discrimination and respect for human rights in all academic discussions on the European Olympic Values	Jan. 2026 – Dec. 2030	Heads of educational and scientific programs  Heads of public consultation initiatives, conferences and academic projects	Human Resources – Faculty and Research Leaders  Funding – NSA will financially support the participation of active academic members in training programs on gender equality in academic contexts	The academy's educational and scientific programs will include at different levels the idea of gender equality as part of the values of education and science  An expanded concept of the values of sport with respect for gender equality in sports clubs and sports classes at school
Inclusion in the annual report of the Rector of the National Sports Academy of information on the ratio	Jan. 2026 – establishing a content element	Human Resources Department  Study affairs Department	Members of the Rector's Board  Deans of the three faculties at NSA	Clarity will be achieved regarding the allocation of human resources and the importance

between men and women in the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan			Head of the Human Resources Department  Head of the Study affairs Department	of gender balance in the appointment and promotion of personnel in the NSA will be emphasized.
Highlighting gender equality in all regulatory documents of the NSA as an indisputable condition in competitive procedures, ethical decisions and communication structures	Jan.2026 – Dec.2027 (update) After 2027 – compliance with the requirement when developing new documents	Legal Department  Human Resources Department  Specialized Centers	Human Resources – representatives of the relevant departments and centers	As a result of this measure, attention will be increased to gender balance in the conduct of academic procedures. Emphasis will be placed on possible intentional or unintentional discrimination in certain competition procedures and the inadmissibility of such discrimination will be emphasized.

SO 2. Implementing innovations in the system of measures to achieve comprehensive and sustainable gender equality (innovative)

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Period of implementation</i>	<i>Responsible unit</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
Update actions to ensure gender equality through information exchange with other academic institutions and biennial status reviews	2026 2028 2030	Human Resources Department  Academic Ethics Commission	Experts, tasked with monitoring the implementation of planned activities and maintaining up-to-date information	The implementation of the gender equality strategy will be focused on constant renewal and inclusion in new initiatives

(national and foreign)				
Including in contracts with sports organisations a provision for the exchange of information on measures to improve gender equality, among other areas of information exchange	Jan. 2026 – Dec. 2030	Legal Consulting Department	Dean / Vice-Rector, responsible for the relevant contract concluded with the sports organization / institution	Achieve a broader scope of joint engagement of organizations in sport and sports education with gender equality and violence against women in sport
Assigning a duty to the International Office of the NSA to regularly monitor progress in gender balance policies of the main European and international organizations and to propose innovative measures in line with these policies	Nov. 2026 – Nov. 2027	Center for International and Project Activities	An expert from the staff has been appointed to process information from the EC websites and other official pages and publish the information on the Centre's website;  A separate section has been created for innovative information on gender equality in sport	Maintained up-to-date information on international developments, trends and policies in the field of gender equality in education and science, as well as in sports;  Provided innovative solutions to update activities
Achieving innovative approaches to improving gender equality through initiatives for active membership in international organizations working in the field of gender	Dec. 2026 – review and collection of information on existing international gender equality organisations  Dec. 2027 – accession to a relevant	Public Relations  Center for International and Project Activities	Financial resources required to pay membership fees to organizations  Human resources – an expert from the Center for International and Project Activities, engaged in maintaining membership, a	Achieved innovation of actions, decisions and contacts through active international representation

equality and against gender-based violence in sport	European organisation		member of the academic community, designated as the academy's representative in the international organization	
Regularly updating the content of study programs with information about cases from sports competitions and sports official decisions related to women's rights or violence against women in sports	Every academic year until Dec. 2030	Department of Psychology, Pedagogy and Sociology at the Faculty of Pedagogy	Leading professors in psychology, pedagogy, philosophy and sociology, determined to include gender equality topics in their disciplines	Students from the Faculty of Sports and the Faculty of Pedagogy will be comprehensively and thoroughly informed about general and specific issues related to gender equality.

SO 3. Creating a system of measures to simultaneously counteract parallel discriminatory practices, one of which is based on gender (intersectional)

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Period of implementation</i>	<i>Responsible unit</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
Establishment of a centralized administrative body to receive and process reports related to violations of human rights and gender equality in professional, domestic, health, and mental health contexts.	2025 – 2026 Presentation of the need to take into account combined discriminatory circumstances  2027 – 2029 Establishment of regulatory rules for reporting combined discriminatory circumstances	Academic Ethics Committee  Legal Department	Members (5) of the Academic Ethics Committee  Legal Consultant	Increased information base on the consequences of combining discriminatory circumstances  Created a specific commitment to receive, report and take action on signals of combined discrimination
Collecting a database by students,	Oct. 2025 – Oct. 2030	Educational and scientific units in the	Chairperson of the Organizing Committees of	The understanding of intersectionality

teachers, and researchers on cases of intersectional discrimination and regular presentation during academic events		academy responsible for the content of seminars and discussion forums	the conference events	will be maximized when addressing issues related to gender discrimination.
Ensuring equal representation in management structures of women with responsibility for providing assistance to faculty members in vulnerable conditions (reporting ad hoc solutions in cases of intersectoral obstacles)	2027 – assessment of management structures and gender balance 2028 – 2030 creation of conditions for a balanced presence of both sexes in structures in order to take into account vulnerable conditions in case of discrimination signals	Governing bodies at the department, faculty, academy level	Member of the management structures with assigned tasks to assist in identifying and resolving issues of combined discrimination	Support and decision-making when reporting mixed discrimination will gain a full and logical countermeasure environment

SO 4. Sustainable maintenance of activities, monitoring of impact and updating of all positive achievements in the field of gender equality in the NSA (impactful)

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Period of implementation</i>	<i>Responsible unit</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
Increased visibility of female leaders in academia and sports (written news, statements, photos, positive stories)	permanent	Public relations department	Teachers from various sports with prominent female athletes  Information resources from various competitions, media, sports organizations	Achieved strong impact of the importance of women in sports in the role of leaders in both the development of sports and society

Creating a system to measure the perception of gender balance by the academic community, including students	Regular follow-up with a frequency of once every 2 years	Department of Psychology, Pedagogy and Sociology	Leading lecturers in sociology and philosophy	Availability of conditions for impact monitoring and internal assessment of the effectiveness of measures to achieve gender balance
Improving working conditions for women according to specific workplace or working time needs	2025 - 2030	Administrative and Business Department  Human Resources Department	Head of Administrative Business Department  Head of Human Resources Department  Financial resources when necessary to adapt the environment to eliminate discrimination	An environment of real support will be created for the inclusion of people with different needs in both academic and administrative work.
Regular communication with student parents (especially women), as well as students with disabilities about their needs and suggestions for facilitating their learning process	regular	Student council	Student Council Chair and additional designated member of the council for communication with vulnerable students at risk of suffering obstacles due to illness or maternity	A system has been established to provide care for student parents in addition to existing measures in the NSA

## 7. Indicators for reporting progress against measures towards specific objectives<sup>18</sup>

### *SO 1. Priority creation of conditions for equal inclusion of genders at all levels of activity and management in sport and sports education (inclusive)*

#### Qualitative indicators

- 90% of women in vulnerable situations (mothers with children under 7 years of age, women with chronic diseases, with disabilities, etc.) state that appropriate working conditions have been created for them

#### Quantitative indicators

- Achieved 100% pay equality for men and women holding the same position
- By the end of the strategy period, 50% of the academic staff (245 people) and 30% of the administrative staff (260 people) were involved in GEP implementation activities.
- Increased number of women in the highest management structures of academic units to 30% of the total number
- Increased number of women to 50% – academic lecturers and researchers as representatives of the academy in international organizations for sport and sports education
- Increased the number of regulatory documents in the National Assembly with an explicit declaration of the inadmissibility of gender discrimination up to 10% by 2030.

### *SO 2. Implementing innovations in the system of measures to achieve comprehensive and sustainable gender equality (innovative)*

#### Qualitative indicators

- Declared interest in progress reports on gender equality policies and announcements of innovative measures in an international environment by members of the Academic Council and the Rectors' Council
- Participation of NSA representatives in organized scientific and public events on the topic of gender equality and women's leadership.

#### Quantitative indicators

- Annual inclusion of at least 2 representatives of the academic community in training courses in the country or abroad
- Funding at least 1 scientific study per year (individually or in a team) on the issues of women and sport

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<sup>18</sup> The indicators are applicable to the last year of the strategy's operation (2030).

- Organizing 1 round table per year with the participation of 80% of sports organizations to discuss issues related to gender equality and violence in sports
- Participation in at least 1 European project – educational or scientific – with innovative developments for gender equality in sport
- Achieved membership in at least 1 International Organization for Gender Equality in Sport.

*SO 3. Creating a system of measures to simultaneously counteract parallel discriminatory practices, one of which is based on gender (intersectional)*

#### Qualitative indicators

- Positive feedback received from at least 1 external organization active in legal affairs regarding initiatives to introduce an intersectional approach
- Creating a team relationship between the NSA and external organizations in cases of signals of combined discrimination

#### Quantitative indicators

- Inclusion of the topic of combined discrimination in at least 2 academic subjects from the planned topics in student education
- Annual publication of at least 1 informational material on the topic of intersectionality in discrimination in sports

SO 4. Sustainable maintenance of activities, monitoring of impact and updating of all positive achievements in the field of gender equality in the NSA (impactful)

#### Qualitative indicators

- Expressed desire by master's and doctoral students of the National Sports Academy to develop some of the aspects of women and sports
- Received a positive assessment from the Rector's Management at the end of the term in 2027 for the work of the Academic Ethics Committee
- Increased student activity for informed participation in civic initiatives with knowledge of core values, including gender equality and non-discrimination

#### Quantitative indicators

- At least 10 materials published annually on the website of the National Sports Academy, related to successes, progress or solving problems of women in sports
- A minimum of 5 members of the academic community designated to create concentrated knowledge and initiatives related to women and sport
- Developed and adopted topics related to gender equality and non-violence in sports in the curricula of 4 academic disciplines

- Six cooperation agreements concluded with sports organizations, which include an obligation to exchange information on issues of gender equality and non-admission of violence in sports.

#### 8. Sports environment and gender equality

The National Sports Academy is the main educational institution in the country for the preparation and improvement of the qualifications of personnel for the system of sports and sports education. This assigns a serious strategic responsibility to the academy for the formation of sports specialists as highly qualified professionals - coaches, physical education teachers and specialists in the use of motor activity for the health and quality of life of people, but also as a community supporting the values of sports, including the dignity and equality of people.

The Academy has the potential to actively influence the way national sport is manifested and it accepts its strategic mission to be a fundamental factor in the views and actions of each of the athletes and coaches. The activities envisaged by this strategy for influencing the sports environment are expressed in the following fields of activity:

- Invitation to at least 10 sports organizations to participate in major scientific conferences that also address gender equality issues in sport
- Involving representatives of sports clubs in scientific research, surveys, data collection
- Annual survey of at least 20 sports clubs regarding needs for organizing qualification training related to gender equality and non-violence in sports
- Inclusion of representatives of sports organizations as practical specialists in lectures on the 4 academic disciplines that include gender equality topics
- Exchange of information and data with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bulgarian Olympic Committee for the purpose of participation of the NSA in the initiatives and plans for gender equality at the national level.

#### 9. Sustainability of the Gender Equality Strategy at the National Sports Academy<sup>19</sup>

The Gender Equality Plan of the National Sports Academy has been developed for a medium-term duration of five years. Every effort will be made to ensure that this strategy finds stable sustainability and to create conditions for maintaining and continuing actions for gender equality in sports and

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<sup>19</sup> The sustainability measures are in line with the general partnership concept for sustainability of activities in sports education and sport, developed within the SUPPORTER project with registration number 101094529-SUPPORTER-HORIZON WIDERA-2022-ERA-1, under the EU's Horizon Europe program.

sports education. Even during the implementation period of this strategy, efforts will be made to achieve sustainability through:

1. Organizational culture for understanding and seeking gender equality – continuous maintenance of information resources on the topic so as to maintain its relevance, as well as implementation
2. Increasing the participation of NSA researchers in Horizon Europe projects, which will highlight the enormous importance of gender equality in science in the European Research Area<sup>20</sup>.
3. There will be an increasingly visible emphasis on intersectionality in the treatment of gender inequality, which will establish the right direction of action and increasingly visible results for the equal rights of men and women in sport and sports education.
4. Participation in partner networks and work in international teams to achieve a culture of gender equality and combat violence in sport, which will lead to long-term action, innovation and broad impact in the European Research Area and the European sport system.
5. Strengthening the assessment of NSA scientific projects and the quality of training, among other criteria, by gender balance of researchers and teachers, which will establish gender balance as a principle in quality science and education.

The sustainability of the strategic measures set out in this document and the intention to continuously update them stem from the assessment of the need and the expected positive impact in achieving a more balanced presence of men and women in all activities of sports education and science, as well as in sport itself. The strategy is an expression of categorical support for democratic values, human rights, non-discrimination and especially in the face of combined risks of isolation from social and economic life.

The search for sustainability on the path being taken with this strategy is also dictated by the full conviction about the place occupied by the Vasil Levski National Sports Academy in the future of national and international sport.

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<sup>20</sup> Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union. Gender equality benefits research and innovation (R&I) by improving the quality and relevance of R&I, attracting and retaining more talent, and ensuring that everyone can maximise their potential.

There has been demonstrable progress towards gender equality in the European Research Area (ERA), but data shows there is still significant work to be done. Gender equality goals can only be achieved through a structural approach to change across the whole European R&I system, entailing the joint commitment of R&I organisations, their funders and national authorities, and the European Commission. (Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans, 2021)

## **Acknowledgment**

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Useful links:

SUPPORTER /EU funded project under HORIZON EUROPE programme/ WIDERA-2022-ERA-1  
<https://www.supporter-project.eu/>

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)  
[https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/european-institute-gender-equality-eige\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/european-institute-gender-equality-eige_en)

European Commission - Gender equality strategy  
[https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en)

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](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en)

EU publications - Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans  
<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffcb06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

EU publications - Impact of gender equality plans across the European research area  
<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/906fcb4a-e504-11ef-bc1c-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

UNESCO – Tackling violence against women and girls in Sport  
[https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/3343\\_unwomen\\_unesco\\_vawg\\_handbook\\_6a\\_singlepage.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/3343_unwomen_unesco_vawg_handbook_6a_singlepage.pdf)

Министерство на труда и социалната политика – Национална стратегия за насърчаване на равнопоставеността на мъжете и жените 2021 – 2030  
<https://www.mlsp.government.bg/uploads/41/test/strategy2021-2030.pdf>

НСИ – Цели за устойчиво развитие 2030. Цел 5 Равнопоставеност на половете  
<https://www.nsi.bg>