



Laeta
laboratório associado

Gender Balance Strategy 2025-2029

**ACTION LINES ADDING TO THE INDIVIDUAL
GENDER EQUALITY PLANS OF LAETA'S
MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONS**

CONTENT

1- Objectives and Context.....	3
2- Gender Balance Diagnostic	4
3- Gender Balance Strategy	6

1- Objectives and Context

This document details the Gender Balance Strategy of LAETA for the period 2025-2029, which gathers the action lines considered essential to be developed to further promote equal opportunities for the women and men composing LAETA's team.

Gender Equality (GE) has been given particular attention by the main international entities over the last years, pushing the awareness of organizations and the adoption and implementation of measures to prevent against and fight gender discrimination. The increase in national¹ and European policies² related to GE issues has also generated a new perspective regarding the conditions that allow and facilitate the balance between professional activity with family, personal life and work, which are guiding the Gender Equality Plans (GEP) of each LAETA Management Institutions (LAETA MI). All LAETA's researchers are formally committed to follow the GEP established by the corresponding LAETA MI.

The GEP in place at each LAETA MI for the period 2022-2024 are available in the public domain³. As most of these plans are first editions, they are mainly focused in setting the conditions to properly monitor and promote gender balance (GB) and inclusiveness. The GEP and ethics management structures established at the LAETA MI ensure independent support, advice and monitoring to the LAETA researchers. Given the specific nature of LAETA's mission, strategic objectives and organisational model, it is advisable to clearly set and communicate the strategy in place to ensure that all researchers also have equal opportunities, rights and access to resources within LAETA.

¹ National policies guiding INEGI's GEP: the Portuguese Republic's Constitution (Article 13), Article 23, and 65 of the Work Code.

² European Policies guiding INEGI's GEP: the European Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025 ([COM\(2020\) 152 final](#)), European Research Area ([COM/2020/628 final](#)).

³ GEP of LAETA Management Institutions:

- INEGI: https://www.inegi.pt/fotos/editor2/Outras/Institucional/INEGI_Plano_Igualdade_Genero.pdf
- IST/IDMEC: <https://www.idmec.tecnico.ulisboa.pt/files/uploads/2024/03/Gender-Equality-Plan-IDMEC-04032023.pdf>
- ADAL: https://www.uc.pt/site/assets/files/430366/genderequalityplan_vf_2022.pdf
- UBI/AEROG: <https://www.ubi.pt/Ficheiros/Entidades/91383/Plano%20de%20igualdade%20de%20g%C3%A9nero3.pdf>

2- Gender Balance Diagnostic

Key Figures

LAETA's fields of activity historically attract more men than women. The weight of women in LAETA team in 2024 stands at 22%, above the average values in the overall Engineering area (typically below 20%, particularly in Mechanical Engineering, LAETA's core knowledge field). The distribution of the share of women in LAETA's Research Groups is presented in Figure 1.

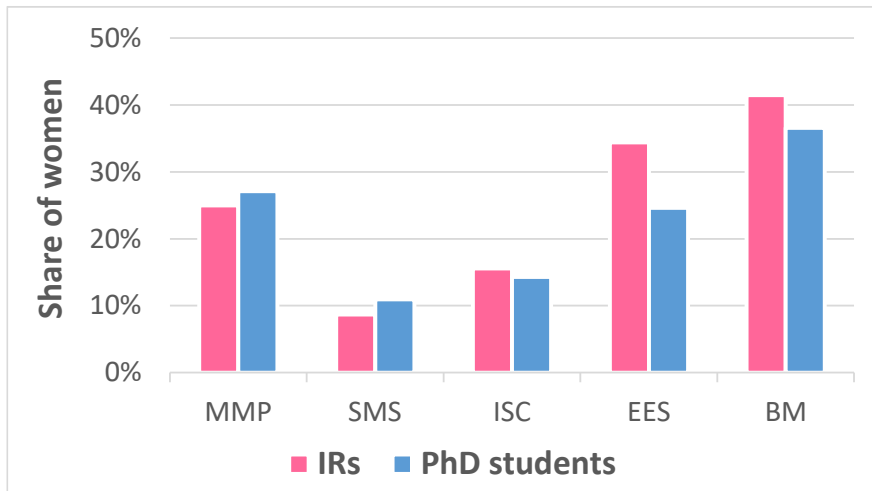


Figure 1: Share of women among the Integrated Researchers (IRs) and PhD students within LAETA Research Groups. Legend: MMP – Materials and Manufacturing Processes; SMS – Structures and mechanical Systems; ISC – Intelligent Systems and Control; EES – Energy, Environment and sustainability; BM – Biomechanics.

The average share of women in LAETA's Governing Bodies stands at 15%, significantly above that observed at the creation of the current governance model in 2018 (4%). LAETA's Steering Committee is composed by the Board, the global coordinators of the Research Groups (RG Coordinators), and the global coordinators of the Thematic Lines (TL Coordinators). The details about the share of women in these groups and in LAETA's Advisory Board, from 2018 to 2024, are presented in Figure 2. This figure shows an evolution towards gender balance in all LAETA's Governing Bodies, except for the LAETA Board.

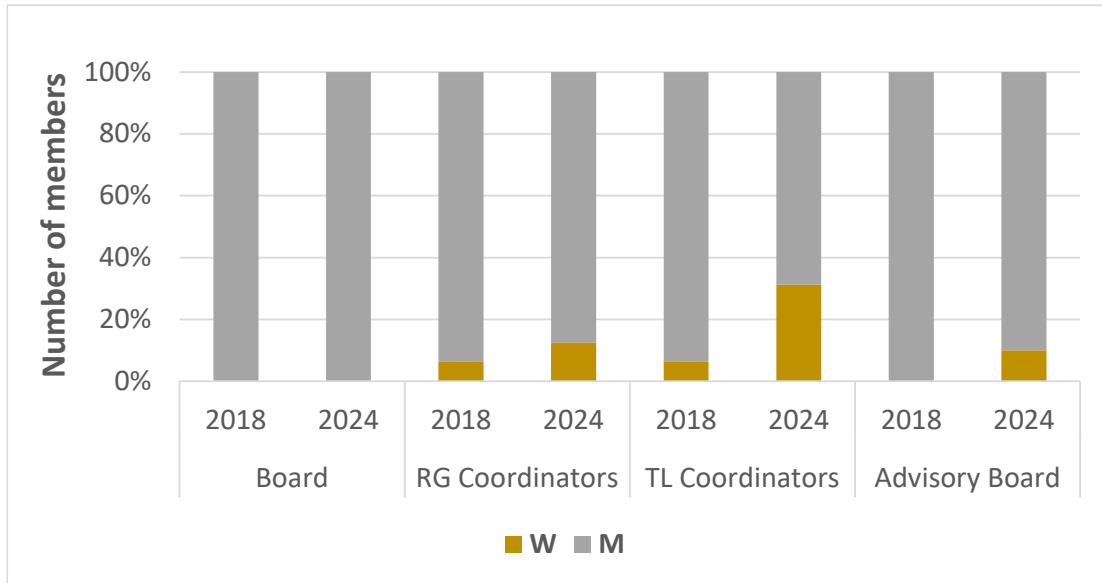


Figure 2: Share of women within the different LAETA Governing Bodies and its Advisory Board. Legend: W-Women; M-Men; RG-Research Group; TL-Thematic Line.

Best practices and opportunities favouring gender balance

The data provided in Section 2 reveal and confirm the expected unbalance of the gender distribution among LAETA’s team, inherent to the historical disparity of the higher availability of men in the Mechanical Engineering field. Despite of this, LAETA has been incorporating a set of good practices promoting effective gender balance and ensuring that its activity runs on a quite neutral and non-discriminatory basis. These measures are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Best practices established in LAETA framing gender balance and inclusiveness aspects.

Purpose	Measure
Non-discrimination	Team management processes are based on meritocracy, and not on gender, ethno or any other type of classes.
	Positive evolution towards inclusiveness of women in the composition of LAETA Governing Bodies.
	No specific reference to gender aspects in all internal and external communication tools, including LAETA’s website and newsletter.
Visibility and Spotlight	Active identification and advertise of funding and other R&D support programs (e.g. FCT RESTART program) and awards (e.g. <i>Amelia Earhart Award</i> , or the <i>McKinsey Next Generation Women Leaders</i>) that promote and advocate for women's career advancement in science. This is resulting in placing the research work developed by LAETA’s women in the spotlight, while contributing to attract and retain women within LAETA, inspiring them to proceed their research work.

	Active identification and advertise of funding and other R&D support programs that are not gender-specific promote, and support of applications from all researchers.
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In addition to the established good practices and successful measures, there are factors specific to LAETA’s research that shall be exploited to further promote gender balance, such as:

- **The increasing multidisciplinary character of the research areas and projects involving LAETA researchers.** This creates a more diverse and welcoming environment for people of different backgrounds, including women and underrepresented minorities, as reflected in the positive evolution from 2018 to 2024 of the share of women coordinating LAETA’s TL projects (Figure 1; from about 6% to 31%). The higher capacity to attract researchers from different disciplines, particularly from Life Sciences, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences (where the number of women is traditionally higher than in the Mechanical Engineering and Aerospace Engineering fields), is also evident among the PhD students and new researchers joining some LAETA Research Groups, such as in the RG BM - Biomechanics and the RG EES - Energy, Environment and Sustainability, as shown in Figure 1.
- **The recognition of LAETA’s excellence in several research areas.** This is also broadening LAETA’s appeal and favouring its capacity to attract talent from different disciplines, countries and genders. This new talent supports the strategy to foster the performance and visibility of LAETA’s research, and to create new specialization areas, as foreseen in LAETA’s strategic objectives for 2025-2029.

3- Gender Balance Strategy

The diagnostic summarized in Section 2 enabled to point out challenges and opportunities regarding gender balance within LAETA. Despite the good practices already established at LAETA and the favourable context, there is room to further promote the access of women to positions of higher responsibility, and to attract and retain talented researchers from knowledge areas more prone to attract women, addressing gender balance while consolidating the increasing multidisciplinary character of LAETA’s research.

Table 2 presents the scope of LAETA Gender Balance Strategy, which includes two main action lines, aimed at implementation (Action Line I) and communication (Action Line II). The main actions to strengthen Gender Balance in each of the action lines, and the respective baseline, are also presented. It must be emphasized that these specific GB pathways are not covered in the individual GEP of LAETA Management Institutions.

Table 2: Scope of the LAETA Gender Balance Strategy.

Action Line I – Implementation: Reinforcing the ability to continuously and timely update and to implement the Gender Balance Strategy.

Baseline: LAETA Board has been acting as coordinator of all activities that contribute in any extent to the Gender Balance Strategy.

Main pathways:

- 1- An internal structure to support the Board in all matters related to promoting GB, the **Working Group for Gender Balance (WG GB)**, will be created. The WG GB members will include researchers at different levels of their careers, of different gender and nationality, and from the several LAETA Research Groups, ensuring diversity and the representativeness of all LAETA researchers. Among other coordination and operational roles, the WG GB will ensure the interface between the LAETA Board, the researchers in charge of the different initiatives to be proposed and all those in position to benefit from them. The LAETA WG GB will also be responsible for monitoring their impact and, with the support of the LAETA Integrated Management team, for monitoring the GB results. These will be regularly communicated to FCT, and to the LAETA MI, in the yearly progress reporting of the Base Funding project. The LAETA WG GB will also ensure the link with the structures of the LAETA MI that are responsible for the implementation of their individual GEP, and explore synergies with their initiatives. The LAETA WG GB will join each 6-months, and meet with LAETA Board on a yearly basis, at least.
- 2- LAETA will pay attention to **opportunities to improve gender balance in its Governing Bodies**, particularly those where it has been more restricted by contextual barriers, such as LAETA’s Board. The regular renewal of the own Governance Bodies of LAETA MI is expected to benefit from the GEP measures being implemented. In particular, LAETA will ensure the presence of at least one women (Full Professor) in the Board that will be active in the next evaluation period. Moreover, the members of the Steering Committee will identify, among their peers, women with acknowledged high-level contributions to LAETA core research fields and willing to serve in a pro-bono basis, therefore in position to be invited to integrate LAETA’s Advisory Board.
- 3- LAETA’s RG Coordinators will promote **multidisciplinary collaborations between internal and external research groups**, with a focus on involving other research fields where the share of women is traditionally higher than in Mechanical Engineering. Similarly, LAETA’s RG Coordinators will promote **opportunities within the several R&D programs and research dissemination initiatives specifically supporting**

women's career advancement in science, ensuring that all researchers are aware of these opportunities. The distributed Science Managers dedicated to LAETA in the different LAETA MIs will also support the RG Coordinators and LAETA's Steering Committee.

Action Line II – Communication: Ensuring that all LAETA researchers are aware of the goals and expected outcomes of the Gender Balance Strategy

Baseline: The following resources developed along the last FCT funding period are considered to be instrumental:

- All LAETA Management Institutions have developed their Gender Equality Plans, in line with the related national and European directives, and the respective actions are being implemented, including the creation of **local GE support structures**.
- With the support of the FCT Base Funding, all LAETA MI have now Science Management personnel dedicated to LAETA, and **a network of distributed science managers and administrative and financial experts**, ensuring LAETA's integrated operational management, was established. A common Knowledge Management system and a website-supported intranet are some of the new resources made available.
- With the support of the FCT Base Funding, a **central communication team** was established and new **operational and communication resources** were created to improve the way LAETA researchers are in contact and aware of the main activities and outputs, while also reinforcing LAETA's external visibility. Among others, an internal newsletter and a new website (<https://laeta.pt/en/>) were created.

Main pathways:

1. In collaboration with the local GE support structures and experts, LAETA will organize **regular training sessions on gender equality and inclusiveness**, eventually targeted on different segments of its research team (PhD students, junior researchers, senior researchers).
2. The new Integrated Management team and the communication tools recently created will be explored in its full extent to **communicate internally the LAETA Gender Balance Strategy**. This will facilitate reaching all researchers with the same level of information and **addressing their GB specific needs in a coordinated way**.