



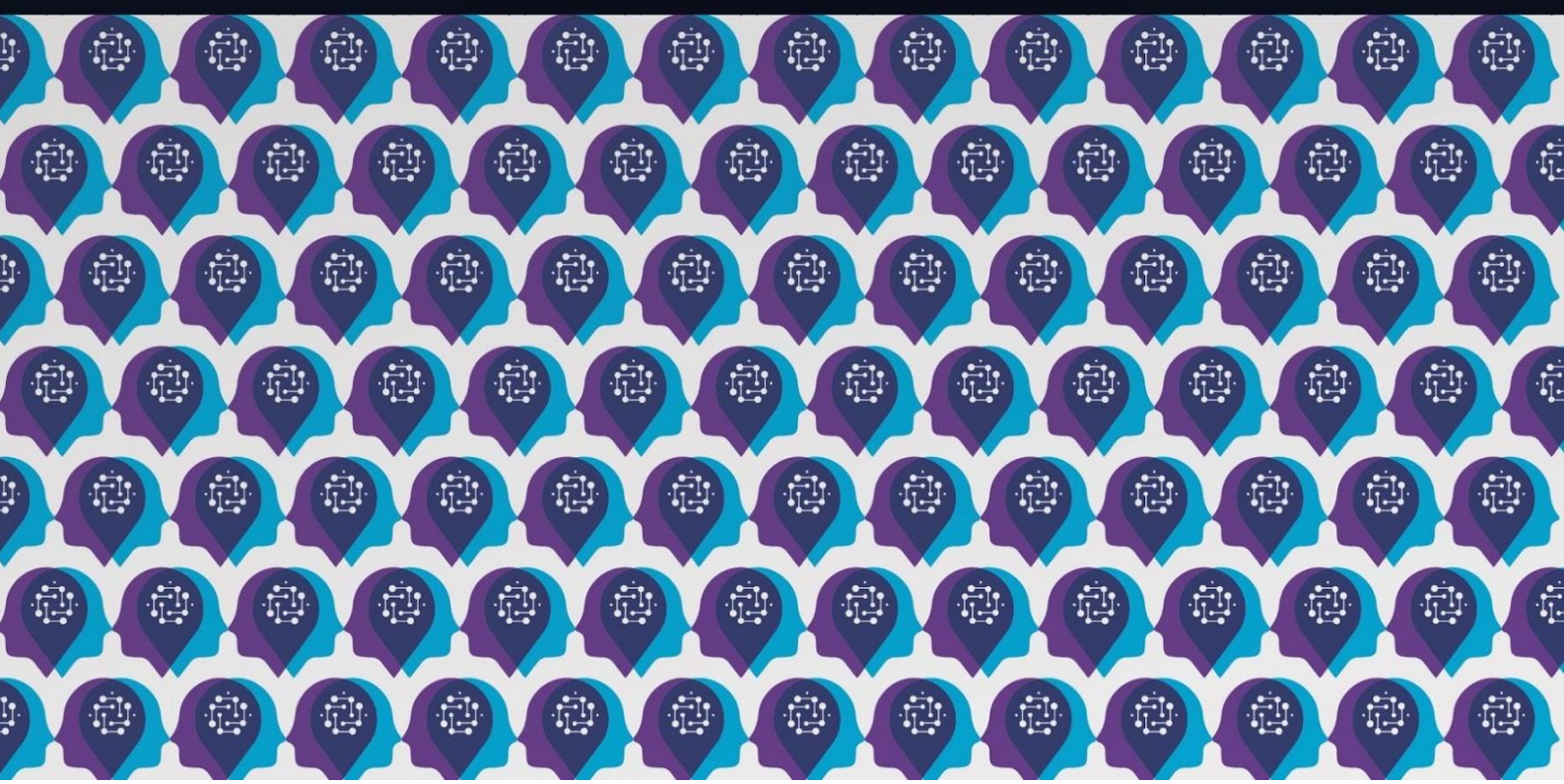
AI4Debunk

D.12.3. Gender Equality Plan

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D.12.3 GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

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Abstract	<p>This Gender Equality Plan is the first milestone towards the approval of guidelines to integrate gender equality within the different project's work packages</p> <p>The AI4Debunk consortium is committed to including gender and intersectionality as a transversal aspect in the project's activities. In line with EU guidelines and objectives, all partners – including the authors of this deliverable – recognise the importance of advancing gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data collection in the development of scientific research. Therefore, we commit to paying particular attention to including, monitoring, and periodically evaluating the participation of different genders in all activities developed within the project, including workshops, webinars and events but also surveys, interviews and research, in general. While applying a non-binary approach</p>

	to data collection and promoting the participation of all genders in the activities, the partners will periodically reflect and inform about the limitations of their approach. Through an iterative learning process, they commit to plan and implement strategies that maximise the inclusion of more and more intersectional perspectives in their activities.
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STATEMENT ON MAINSTREAMING GENDER

The AI4Debunk consortium is committed to including gender and intersectionality as a transversal aspect in the project's activities. In line with EU guidelines and objectives, all partners – including the authors of this deliverable – recognise the importance of advancing gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data collection in the development of scientific research. Therefore, we commit to paying particular attention to including, monitoring, and periodically evaluating the participation of different genders in all activities developed within the project, including workshops, webinars and events but also surveys, interviews and research, in general. While applying a non-binary approach to data collection and promoting the participation of all genders in the activities, the partners will periodically reflect and inform about the limitations of their approach. Through an iterative learning process, they commit to plan and implement strategies that maximise the inclusion of more and more intersectional perspectives in their activities.

DISCLAIMER

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3	PILOT4DEV	P4D	BE
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5	CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE	CNR-IRPPS	IT
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ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AR	Augmented Reality
GA	General Assembly
GEP	Gender equality plan
IMT	Innovation Management Team
ML	Machine Learning
MST	Management Support Team
SC	Steering Committee
VR	Virtual Reality
WPL	Work Package Leader
WP	Work Packages

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's rapidly evolving technological and societal landscapes, achieving gender equality is not only a matter of social justice but also a critical driver of innovation, creativity, and sustainability. Recognizing this, AI4DEBUNK is committed to integrating gender equality as a core principle, ensuring that our work not only advances the frontiers of knowledge and technology but also contributes to a more equitable and inclusive society.

In this context, the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) articulates the foundational principles and commitment to embedding gender equality throughout the AI4DEBUNK project. This GEP serves as a strategic document, guiding the integration of gender considerations into all aspects of project implementation. The GEP underscores the project's dedication to fostering an inclusive, equitable environment that recognizes and addresses gender disparities, biases, and inequalities.

This GEP is structured around overarching objectives that align with our commitment to gender equality. These objectives serve as the pillars upon which to guide gender equality efforts and ensure that they are inclusive, diverse, and equitable. By implementing this plan, AI4DEBUNK aims to enhance the quality and relevance of the work and set a precedent for gender equality in research and innovation.

The GEP ambitions to:

- Promote gender balance within teams and leadership structures;
- Integrate gender analysis into the Work Packages to ensure that our outputs are inclusive and equitable;
- Engage a diverse range of stakeholders in a manner that values and promotes gender diversity
- Ensure that Gender biases are not reproduced in the developed tools;
- Develop tools and interfaces that are accessible and meet the diverse needs of men and women;
- Trigger the interest and involvement of women in AI and Technologies of Information and Communication, and enhance their digital skills;
- Ensure sociological assessments consider the differential impacts on genders;
- Include gender as a priority in dissemination and communication strategies.

The GEP is a reflection of AI4DEBUNK's core values and a roadmap to achieving a more gender-equitable future in disinformation. By prioritising gender equality, AI4DEBUNK aims to enhance the social relevance, impact, and sustainability of its outcomes, contributing to a more just and equitable use of AI systems to tackle disinformation.

For the purpose of this report, gender refers to the definition of the World Health Organization: “the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other”. Gender equality refers to the equality between individuals being women, men and non-binary. For this specific project the priority is the equality between women and men. With this GEP, the AI4DEBUNK project presents a gender-inclusive approach to fighting disinformation by integrating gender equality into leadership, tool development, and outreach efforts, promoting safe and equitable digital spaces. It demonstrates how gender considerations enhance technological innovation, fostering inclusivity and trust in the digital information landscape.

The gender equality plan is the one proposed for the first year and is an update of Milestone 8. It will be adapted throughout the project. Training will be organized with all the partners as follow-up throughout 2025 during one of the communication meetings.

1 INTRODUCTION

The AI4DEBUNK project, aimed at combating disinformation with advanced AI solutions, provides a unique context for integrating gender equality. Recognizing disinformation's varied impacts across genders, the project's Gender Equality Plan is worked out to ensure inclusivity and equity in developing AI technologies. This approach underscores the necessity of a gender-inclusive approach to enhance the project effectiveness and societal relevance. The plan aims to create a balanced representation within teams, gender-sensitive research methodologies, AI tools developed and educational and communication materials that promote gender equality. This will highlight AI4DEBUNK's commitment to fostering a resilient, informed, and inclusive society.

1.1 SCOPE OF THE PLAN:

Within this context, AI4DEBUNK is committed to embedding gender equality across its internal organisational structure and Work Packages 1 to 18. This plan is applicable to all project partners, including the project personnel.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the activities to be performed in Task 12.3 are as follow:

- Achieve and maintain gender balance within project teams, leadership, and decision-making committees;
- Incorporate gender analysis into the methodologies and content of research and development activities;
- Foster gender-sensitive engagement strategies ensuring inclusive participation;
- Design and disseminate project outputs that are accessible and beneficial to women and men;
- Establish mechanisms for the continuous monitoring and evaluation of gender equality outcomes within the project;
- Avoid the development of gender biases in AI technologies;
- Promote the involvement of women in the technologies of information and communication.

2 GENDER EQUALITY IN THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE (WP 1–3)

Leadership and Decision-Making Balance: AI4DEBUNK will ensure gender balance in leadership roles and decision-making processes, promoting diversity in perspectives and equity in project governance. This is at the General Assembly (GA), a Steering Committee (SC), and a Management Support Team (MST) composed of the legal, administrative, and financial support staff of the PC, an Innovation Management Team (IMT) and WPLs.

2.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The main objectives for leadership and governance across WP 1, WP 2, and WP 3 are as follows:

- To ensure gender balance in leadership roles and decision-making processes
- Promote a culture of inclusivity and respect where diverse perspectives are valued and heard.
- Regularly evaluate the representation of women in leadership roles and make adjustments as needed. Promoting Equal Opportunities: Creating opportunities for all genders to participate fully in the project, including recruitment, training, and career development activities.

2.2 ACTION POINTS

Below are the action points aligned with the objectives of WP 1, WP 2, and WP 3:

- Develop gender-sensitive job descriptions that focus on the skills and qualifications required for the role, rather than gender-based stereotypes;
- Provide equal access to training and development opportunities for all genders, regardless of their seniority or background;
- Have women involved in the teams in the project management and in all the WPs;
- Make sure that all genders are involved in the technical and non-technical discussions;
- Celebrate successes and share best practices: e.g. Gender equality in Combatting Disinformation (WP 4 and 5)

Work Packages 4 and 5 are crucial in addressing the challenges of disinformation, information manipulation, fake news, and propaganda while protecting diverse groups vulnerable to disinformation. This section will seek to use a gender-inclusive approach to ensure that equal and balanced representation for all genders is given. These work packages will not only enhance the project's effectiveness but also contribute to a more equitable digital information landscape.

2.3 ACTION POINTS

The main action points to be considered for WP4 and WP5 are as follows:

- Where feasible, data collection and analysis should consider gender differences in how disinformation is received and believed;
- Where necessary, check if certain disinformation campaigns specifically target genders, and analyse the content for gendered narratives or biases;
- Include gender as a critical factor when identifying groups that are particularly vulnerable to disinformation;
- When developing tools and solutions, AI4DEBUNK will ensure they are designed to be accessible and useful for men and women.

3 INCORPORATING GENDER CONCERNS IN KNOWLEDGE GRAPHS (WP 6 AND 7)

This section will seek to prioritise gender considerations in designing and refining knowledge graphs for inclusivity while ensuring the results effectively represent and serve diverse gender perspectives.

3.1 ACTION POINTS

The main action points for WP6 and WP7 are as follows:

- Where feasible, ensure the initial data collection from reputable fact-checking websites accounts for disinformation targeting or affecting genders differently;
- Where necessary, the data used to build and refine the knowledge graphs will seek to include gender-diverse sources and perspectives to avoid gender bias;
- Where feasible, examine the content within the knowledge graphs for gender biases or stereotypes. This ensures that the graphs serve as tools for understanding and dismantling gendered disinformation;

- Collect and incorporate feedback from a gender-diverse user base to make the knowledge graphs more accessible and relevant to all users.

4 EMBEDDING GENDER EQUALITY IN AI/ML DISINFORMATION DETECTION (WP 8 AND 9)

WP 8 and 9 leverage AI/ML technologies for advanced disinformation detection. It is important to ensure that AI/ML solutions are fair and sensitive to all genders. Therefore, the GEP will incorporate adequate safeguards by embedding gender equality into the technological fabric of disinformation detection. This will ensure that AI/ML solutions are equitable and sensitive to the diverse experiences of individuals across gender spectrums.

4.1 ACTION POINTS

The key action points for WP 8 and WP 9 are as follows:

- Ensure that data sets used for training AI/ML models include a wide range of gender perspectives and experiences to enable the model to detect disinformation affecting various gender groups;
- Where feasible, the AI/ML models will seek to reduce gender biases by reviewing and adjusting algorithms to prevent stereotyping or overlooking gender-specific disinformation patterns;
- Involve users of diverse genders in testing phases to gather feedback on the AI/ML models' effectiveness and inclusivity. Use this feedback to refine the models before wide-scale implementation;
- Provide training for team members on gender sensitivity and bias in AI systems;
- Ensure documentation and user guides for the AI/ML models incorporate gender-inclusive language and considerations.

5 GENDER DIVERSITY IN TOOL DEVELOPMENT (WP 10 AND 11)

The aim of this section is to ensure that all digital solutions, including APIs, web plug-ins, smartphone apps, collaborative platforms, and AR/VR interfaces, are accessible, inclusive, and equitable across diverse gender identities. Specifically, the section will enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of AI-driven disinformation detection tools by incorporating diverse gender perspectives in the development, integration, and testing phases of digital interfaces.

5.1 ACTION POINTS

The main action points for WP 10 and WP 11 are as follows:

- Implement inclusive design principles that account for the needs and experiences of users across the gender spectrum. This includes using gender-neutral language in interfaces and documentation and designing features that are accessible to all users;
- Ensure that any tools or interfaces developed are designed with all users in mind, regardless of gender;
- Recruit a diverse group of beta testers that represent a broad range of gender identities. This diversity in testing will help identify any gender-specific needs or biases in the interfaces;
- Use targeted outreach and recruitment strategies in colleges and groups to engage underrepresented gender groups in beta-testing activities;
- Create feedback mechanisms for beta testers to report on the usability, accessibility, and inclusivity of the interfaces from a gender perspective;
- Actively seek feedback on how the tools can better serve diverse gender identities, particularly in detecting and addressing disinformation that targets or affects specific genders;
- Documentation and help guides for the tools specify that the tool is mentioned for a diverse target audience

6 GENDER EQUALITY IN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT (WP 12, 13, AND 14)

WPs 12, 13, and 14 focus on sociological assessments at various stages of the AI4DEBUNK project. By incorporating gender concerns, it will ensure that AI4DEBUNK's outcomes are equitable and informed by diverse perspectives. The sociological assessment will seek to integrate gender analysis throughout the sociological assessments and ensure multi-stakeholder recommendations consider and promote gender equity within the AI4DEBUNK project.

6.1 ACTION POINTS

The key action points for WP12, WP13, and WP14 are as follows:

- Incorporating gender analysis to understand how different genders perceive and are affected by disinformation;
- Use of gender-disaggregated data wherever possible to highlight distinct patterns and impacts;

- Engage a diverse group of stakeholders, including those representing various gender perspectives, in discussions and focus groups;
- Facilitate gender-balanced participation in all stakeholder meetings and focus groups;
- Feedback on the gender inclusivity of the project's tools and methodologies from beta testers and stakeholders;
- Design of tools with a focus on user-friendliness and accessibility for all genders, incorporating features that address the specific vulnerabilities and needs identified through gender analysis;
- Equip stakeholders and beta testers with knowledge on gender considerations in disinformation, empowering them to provide informed feedback;
- Ensure beta testers are diverse groups of people with focus on gender balance;
- Ensure a balance of gender/vulnerable groups are present in the focus groups, which involves representatives from civil society, social media users, public organisations, businesses, creative industries, the education sector, and digital companies etc.

7 GENDER EQUALITY IN COMMUNICATION, EXPLOITATION AND OUTREACH (WP 15, 16, AND 17)

The GEP for Work Packages 15, 16, and 17 of the AI4DEBUNK project focuses on integrating gender equality into communication, dissemination, and exploitation efforts. It emphasises gender-balanced representation, the use of gender-inclusive language, and the engagement of a diverse stakeholder group, including underrepresented genders. This plan underlines AI4DEBUNK's commitment to promoting gender equality and ensuring that project outcomes are accessible and beneficial to all.

7.1 ACTION POINTS

Finally, the GEP is proposing the following action points for WP 15, WP 16, and WP 17 to ensure gender equality in AI4debunk's communications and dissemination activities:

- Develop a communication and dissemination checklist that includes gender-sensitive language and imagery. This ensures promotional videos, brochures, and online content represent diverse genders and avoid stereotypes. This will be disseminated to the partners;
- Train the partners' communication teams on gender-sensitive communication practices (during one of the communication meetings);
- Map stakeholders to identify groups led by or serving women and underrepresented genders. Ensure these stakeholders are actively engaged in dissemination and exploitation activities;

- Strive for gender balance among speakers and participants in project events, webinars, and workshops;
- Ensure all collaterals are gender diverse and will cater to a wide audience;
- Develop business plans for demos and use cases that consider the needs and preferences of diverse genders;
- For learning programs developed under Tasks 16.4 and 17.4, ensure content is inclusive and addresses the information needs of diverse genders. This includes creating scenarios and examples in serious games and educational comic books that are relatable to all genders;
- Pilot these learning programs with groups of diverse genders to gather feedback and make necessary adjustments before wider dissemination;
- Games created for schools should be able to cater to a gender diverse.

8 IMPLEMENTATION

Each partner will appoint one person in charge of the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan. The person in charge will report progress and any questions regularly to Pilot4dev. This information will be shared with UL the lead coordinator for the reporting on the project.

9 CONCLUSION

The AI4DEBUNK project, with its GEP, sets a new standard for integrating gender equality into technological and sociological research and development, to involve women in digital tech, and to fight against bias. By ensuring gender balance in leadership, incorporating gender considerations in combating disinformation, developing gender-inclusive tools, and promoting gender diversity in communication and outreach, AI4DEBUNK not only aims to counteract disinformation effectively but also contributes to a more equitable and inclusive digital information landscape. Through this integrated and holistic approach, the AI4DEBUNK seeks to demonstrate that technological innovation and gender equality are mutually reinforcing, paving the way for a future where digital spaces are safe, trustworthy, inclusive for everyone with an active participation of people of all genders.

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