






## EIT RawMaterials – Gender Equality Policy & Strategy with Action Plan 2026–2028

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# EIT RawMaterials – Gender Equality Policy & Strategy with Action Plan 2026–2028

## 1. Introduction: EIT RawMaterials and its Mission

EIT RawMaterials is a Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) established by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) to strengthen Europe's competitiveness, resilience, and strategic autonomy across the entire raw materials value chain. Since its inception in 2015, EIT RawMaterials has become Europe's principal actor for innovation, investment, education, and policy alignment in raw and advanced materials, spanning exploration, extraction, processing, recycling, and circularity.

Mandated by the European Commission, EIT RawMaterials plays a central role in delivering EU priorities, including the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA), the Net-Zero Industry Act (NZIA), the forthcoming Circular Economy Act, the EIT Strategic Agenda (Vision 2.0), and broader objectives related to the green and digital transitions. The Business Plan 2026–2028 (BP 26–28) sets out a focused five-pillar strategy integrating innovation, business creation, skills development, regional cohesion, and policy alignment, underpinned by a robust and increasingly diversified financial sustainability model.

In a context of growing geopolitical uncertainty and supply chain vulnerabilities, access to critical and strategic raw materials has become a defining economic and security challenge for Europe. As highlighted in *The Future of European Competitiveness* (Draghi Report), Europe's continued import dependency limits its ability to compete, defend its interests, and lead the green and digital transitions. EIT RawMaterials addresses this challenge by accelerating market-ready innovations, mobilizing investment, building skills, and fostering a resilient, diversified, and sustainable European raw materials ecosystem.

Gender equality and inclusion are integral to this mission. Unlocking Europe's full innovation and talent potential requires the systematic removal of barriers to women's participation and leadership across research, innovation, entrepreneurship, education, and governance. This Gender Equality Policy & Strategy with Action Plan 2026–2028 articulates EIT RawMaterials' commitment to embedding gender equality across all activities and work packages, fully aligned with the Business Plan 2026–2028 and Horizon Europe requirements.

## 2. Overall Gender Equality Policy & Strategy

### 2.1 Policy Commitment

EIT RawMaterials is firmly committed to promoting gender equality, diversity, and inclusion as core values and strategic enablers of impact, excellence, and financial sustainability. The organization recognizes that gender-balanced teams and inclusive innovation ecosystems deliver better outcomes, stronger resilience, and higher societal value.

The Gender Equality Policy & Strategy 2026–2028 is fully aligned with:

- The EU Gender Equality Strategy,
- Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan (GEP) requirements,
- The EIT Gender Equality Action Plan 2025–2027,
- EIT RawMaterials' Strategic Agenda and Business Plan 2026–2028.

Gender equality is addressed both as a horizontal principle, mainstreamed across all work packages and governance structures, and as a targeted intervention area, with specific measures to support women in leadership, entrepreneurship, education, and innovation.

### 2.2 Strategic Objectives

The Gender Equality Policy & Strategy is structured around four overarching objectives:

1. Enhance women's representation in entrepreneurship and leadership across the raw materials value chain, with a particular focus on startups, scaleups, projects, and decision-making bodies.
2. Promote gender equality in education, research, and innovation, ensuring equal access to skills development, career progression, and funding opportunities.
3. Mainstream gender considerations across all programmes, activities, and funding mechanisms, integrating gender impact, gender balance, and inclusiveness into design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
4. Foster a gender-inclusive organizational culture and governance framework, based on transparency, accountability, fair recruitment and evaluation, and continuous capacity building.

### 2.3 Governance and Accountability

Implementation of the Gender Equality Policy & Strategy is overseen through:

- An HR-led Gender Equality governance framework, with overall responsibility anchored in the Human Resources function. HR acts as the permanent owner of the Gender Equality Policy & Strategy, ensuring continuity, compliance with Horizon Europe and EIT requirements, and alignment with organizational development, recruitment, training, and people management processes. This governance setup remains in place until further organizational decisions.
- A cross-functional Gender Equality & Diversity Working Group, coordinated by HR and composed of representatives from across work packages, legal entities, and organizational functions. The Working

Group reflects the organization's broader diversity background (including gender, geography, seniority, and professional profiles) and supports operational implementation, gender mainstreaming, knowledge exchange, and the integration of equality considerations into day-to-day activities.

- Annual monitoring and reporting through the EIT RawMaterials Gender Equality Report, including KPIs, gap analysis, and corrective actions. Presentation to the Board and Core Management Team.
- Consideration of independent mid-term and final reviews to assess compliance with Horizon Europe and EIT standards.

### 3. Gender Equality Action Plan 2026–2028

*(\*Aligned with Business Plan 2026–2028)*

#### 3.1 Work Package 1 - Innovation

##### Strategic Contribution to Gender Equality

Innovation activities are designed to accelerate high-impact technologies while ensuring that gender considerations are embedded in project design, consortia composition, and leadership.

##### Key Actions (2026–2028)

- Integrate gender-inclusive language, criteria, and procedures into all KAVA call texts, guidelines, and templates.
- Require explicit consideration of gender balance and gender impact at proposal stage.
- Monitor gender-specific metrics during project execution (new female recruits, leadership progression, gender-specific actions).
- Deliver gender inclusiveness training for staff, evaluators, and external experts.
- Partner with networks such as Women in Tech, Women in Mining, WomenTechEU, and similar initiatives.

Key Targets by 2028
- 75% of innovation projects consider gender impact.
- 25% of project leadership teams include women (from 20%).

#### 3.2 Work Package 2 - Education

##### Strategic Contribution to Gender Equality

Education and skills development are central levers to expand Europe's talent pool and address skills shortages by attracting and retaining female talent.



#### Key Actions (2026–2028)

- Ensure gender-balanced outreach, communication, and role model visibility across all education programmes.
- Maintain and expand modular, accessible learning formats aligned with life-long learning.
- Leverage best practices from initiatives such as *Girls Go Circular*.
- Integrate gender-sensitive monitoring into enrolment, completion, and career progression metrics.

Key Targets by 2028
- Achieve and sustain 40% female enrolment across all education activities.
- Strengthen female participation in emerging digital, professional, and VET-oriented skills programmes.

### 3.3 Work Package 3 - Business Creation

#### Strategic Contribution to Gender Equality

Business Creation contributes to gender equality by reducing structural barriers to access funding, visibility, and investment for women entrepreneurs, while ensuring fair and inclusive access to EIT RawMaterials business creation instruments within existing budgetary and operational constraints.

#### Key Actions (2026–2028)

- Ensure that all Business Creation calls and funding instruments actively encourage applications from women-led startups and scaleups through gender-sensitive outreach, inclusive communication, and visibility of female role models, without restricting eligibility or ring-fencing limited call budgets.
- Embed gender considerations and minimum monitoring targets across Business Creation activities, including application, and selection.
- Promote women entrepreneurs through awards, investor days, pitching events, and speaking opportunities, increasing their visibility within the raw materials and investment ecosystem.
- Leverage partnerships with female founder networks and gender-lens investors, including EIT Supernovas and WomenTechEU, to expand deal flow, investor access, and role-model effects.

Key Targets by 2028
- 25% female applicants to Booster and entrepreneurship programmes.
- 25% of Business Creation funding allocated to women-led ventures.
Increased participation of women-led startups across the Business Creation portfolio, with progress reviewed annually.
- 5% of total investment attracted from women-led ventures (EITHE06.1).

### 3.4 Work Package 4 - Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS)

#### Strategic Contribution to Gender Equality

RIS activities support gender equality by strengthening innovation and entrepreneurship capacity in underrepresented regions, particularly EU-13 and transition economies.

#### Key Actions (2026–2028)

- Targeted outreach and capacity-building activities for women researchers and entrepreneurs in RIS regions.
- Integration of gender equality expectations into RIS-focused calls and centrally managed activities.

Key Targets by 2028
- 20% of RIS projects with female leadership.
- 30% of Country Representatives with female leadership.

### 3.5 Work Package 5 - Coordination and Governance

#### Strategic Contribution to Gender Equality

Coordination ensures that gender equality is embedded across governance, organizational development, and partner engagement.

#### Key Actions (2026–2028)

- Gender mainstreaming workshops for senior leadership and staff.
- Regular training on gender equality, diversity & inclusion, anti-discrimination, and harassment.
- Mandatory unconscious bias training embedded in onboarding and evaluation processes.
- Gender-balanced recruitment and evaluation panels.
- Clear gender equality expectations in all call documentation and partner engagements.
- Cross-departmental learning through SUPERNOVAS thematic workshops.

### 3.6 Work Packages 6, 7 and 8 - Communication, Financial Sustainability and Ecosystem Development

Across Communication, Financial Sustainability, and Ecosystem Development, gender mainstreaming is applied as a horizontal principle.

#### Key Actions (2026–2028)

- Visibility of women innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders in all communication and dissemination activities.
- Gender-sensitive promotion of fee-based services, consulting, and ecosystem offerings.
- Integration of gender considerations into financial sustainability instruments and ecosystem services.

These actions contribute to a more diverse, inclusive, and resilient raw materials ecosystem while reinforcing EIT RawMaterials' position as a trusted European partner and impact-driven organization.

## 4. Conclusion

Through this Gender Equality Policy & Strategy and Action Plan 2026–2028, EIT RawMaterials reaffirms its commitment to gender equality as a strategic priority and a driver of innovation, competitiveness, and societal impact. The approach set out in this document is intentionally impact-oriented, proportionate, and aligned with the operational and financial realities of the Business Plan 2026–2028.

Progress against the stated objectives and indicative targets will be reviewed on an annual basis, using portfolio-level monitoring, qualitative assessment, and KPI tracking in line with Horizon Europe and EIT requirements. Where gaps, constraints, or unintended effects are identified, **corrective actions will be proposed and implemented as appropriate**, ensuring continuous improvement while preserving flexibility in response to evolving market conditions, deal flow, and organizational priorities.

By embedding gender equality as a horizontal principle across all work packages, governance structures, and delivery mechanisms, EIT RawMaterials aims to achieve sustained progress over time, contributing to a more inclusive, innovative, and resilient European raw materials ecosystem without creating rigid or disproportionate commitments.

## Document

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