

D6.2

Report on possible actions to improve gender balance, minority representation in the CAPABLE consortium

December 18, 2023

Programme Call:	Cross-sectoral solutions for the climate transition (HORIZON-CL5-2021-D1-01)
Grant agreement ID:	101056891
Project Title:	ClimAte Policy AcceptaBiLity Economic framework
Project Acronym	CAPABLE
Partners:	CMCC (Project Coordinator), EUI, IESEG, CNRS, PIK, MCC, UAB, CUNI, RUG, E6, ETH Zurich.
Work-Package:	WP6
Deliverable #:	D6.2
Deliverable Type:	R — Document, report
Contractual Date of Delivery:	31 October 2023
Actual Date of Delivery:	18 December 2023



Title of Document:	Report on possible actions to improve gender balance, minority representation in the CAPABLE consortium
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Content of this report:	This report details a list of actions taken and to be taken in the next future to improve gender balance and minority representation in the CAPABLE project
Dissemination Level:	PU – Public

Document revisions		
<i>Author</i>	<i>Revision content</i>	<i>Date</i>
Laura Pellizzola	Initial draft	20/10/2023
Silvia Pianta	First revision	11/11/2023
Johannes Emmerling	General revision	30/11/2023
Laura Pellizzola	Final Document	18/12/2023



Glossary

Abbreviation	Full term
CA	Consortium Agreement
CO	Project Coordinator
CB	Coordination Board
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GA	Grant Agreement
SH	Stakeholders
WP	Work Package
WPL	Work Package Leader



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Executive Summary

CAPABLE pays much attention to diversity and mostly to gender-related issues: at the organisational level, the CAPABLE consortium aims at a roughly gender-balanced number of highly qualified researchers from different disciplines.

At the time of the proposal, women represented 38 per cent of the consortium's involved staff. We committed to raising this share to over 40 percent throughout the project hiring by giving precedence to female candidates. As of the end of October 2023, the consortium's staff engagement comprises 45 percent females.

Women represent almost 50 percent of the current members of the advisory board, an important balance test given the seniority of board members and their important role in the project. Additionally CAPABLE committed that at least 40 percent of the participants in each stakeholder event are females. CAPABLE is dedicated to the professional development of female scientists and plans to promote their participation in training and capacity building activities.

We are planning concrete actions to fill the gap: soon we will organize a gender equality training and will set a mentoring program. Complementary to the already strong inclusivity and diversity strategies of CAPABLE, the project will additionally ensure that researchers and employees will be recruited openly and fairly.

Achieving diversity balance in a project is not only a matter of fairness but also a strategic advantage that can lead to better results and a more inclusive work environment.



1 Introduction

Research on gender balance in academia highlights persistent disparities in representation, opportunities, and recognition. Studies often identify factors such as implicit biases, lack of mentorship, and family responsibilities as barriers.

Initiatives promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion aim to address these issues, emphasizing the importance of fostering an inclusive environment for all genders. However, challenges remain, indicating the ongoing need for comprehensive strategies to achieve true gender balance in research and academia.

The key themes and findings from existing research on gender balance in academia refer to:

Representation Disparities: Numerous studies document underrepresentation of women, especially at senior academic levels, across disciplines (Stoet & Geary; and AAUW).

Barriers and Challenges: Implicit biases, stereotypes, and gendered expectations contribute to barriers for women in academia; family responsibilities and work-life balance often affect women's career progression (Mason & Wolfinger)

Impact of Institutional Culture: Research emphasizes the role of institutional culture in fostering or hindering gender equity; mentorship, inclusive policies, and supportive work environments positively influence gender balance.

Intersectionality: Intersectional approaches recognize that gender imbalances intersect with other identity factors, such as race and ethnicity; Women of colour often face compounded challenges in academia.

Initiatives and Interventions: Numerous initiatives aim to address gender imbalances, including diversity and inclusion programs, mentorship schemes, and policy changes.

Academic Publishing and Recognition: Studies highlight biases in peer review, citation practices (Wennerås & Wold), and the allocation of research funding that contribute to gender disparities.

Global Perspectives: Gender imbalances in academia are observed globally, with variations influenced by cultural and regional factors.

We can affirm that gender balance in an institution as well as in a project is crucial for several reasons:

1. **Diverse Perspectives:** A balanced gender representation ensures a wider range of perspectives, ideas, and experiences, which can lead to more creative and effective solutions.
2. **Equal Opportunities:** It promotes equality by giving everyone, regardless of their gender, an equal opportunity to contribute and excel in the project.



3. **Improved Decision-Making:** Research has shown that diverse teams tend to make better decisions by considering a broader set of viewpoints and potential risks.
4. **Enhanced Creativity:** A mix of genders can boost creativity and innovation, as different approaches to problem-solving are encouraged.
5. **Legal and Ethical Compliance:** In many regions, there are legal requirements or ethical standards that call for gender equality in the workplace and project settings.
6. **Employee Satisfaction:** Promoting gender balance can contribute to higher job satisfaction, which can improve overall team morale and productivity.
7. **Better Understanding of the Audience:** In the dissemination activities, a balanced gender perspective can help in understanding and addressing the needs and preferences of a diverse audience base.

In summary, achieving gender balance in a project is not only a matter of fairness but also a strategic advantage that can lead to better results and a more inclusive work environment.

2 What Consortium did to improve gender balance and minority representation so far?

Since the beginning, CAPABLE has paid much attention to diversity and gender-related issues and has developed a strong view on inclusivity and diversity strategies.

In our consortium, diversity is not just a goal; it's a defining characteristic that enriches our collective experience. Our team is a mosaic of unique perspectives, talents, and backgrounds, reflecting a commitment to fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and included.

One of the strengths of our group lies in its exceptional diversity, especially in terms of nationality representation at the beginning and now also in terms of gender. We recognize the importance of not just acknowledging our differences but leveraging them as sources of strength. This diversity extends beyond visible aspects to encompass a variety of experiences, thoughts, and talents, trying to create a truly inclusive atmosphere.

Our commitment to a well-diversified team is reflected in our recruitment practices, mentorship programs, and opportunities for professional development. We believe that a diverse team leads to more creativity, innovation, and resilience. Every member brings a unique set of skills and insights that contribute to the success of the whole.

Our commitment to diversity is not just a reflection of societal expectations but a genuine belief in the strength that comes from embracing and celebrating our differences. We believe in the power



of inclusion in driving excellence and fostering a culture of respect, understanding, and collaboration.

At the time of the proposal, female representation among the consortium's staff stood at 38 percent. In our commitment during that period, we pledged to increase this representation to surpass 40 percent throughout the project's hiring process, with a preference for female candidates, all else being equal.

Based on the data collected from our partners, the consortium demonstrates a reasonable level of gender diversity. Several points substantiate that the consortium maintains a well-balanced diversity profile:

- As of the end of October 2023, the consortium's staff engagement comprises 45 percent females, achieving and sustaining the organizational-level target throughout the project's entire duration.
- Regarding the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees working for CAPABLE, the overall percentage of women stands at 49.4 percent.
- The coordination team is composed by one male (coordinator) and two females (deputy coordinator and project manager).
- When considering FTE employees, the hiring process within the project has been notably balanced, with newly hired personnel comprising 45.6 percent females. Both in terms of FTE and absolute numbers, the proportion of females exceeds that of the proposal period.

It is noteworthy that the target has been attained in the composition of the advisory board, with a well-balanced representation of males and females. Women account for nearly 50 percent (5 out of 11) of the current advisory board members, a significant balance achievement given the seniority and important roles of board members in the project.

Ensuring a minimum of 40 percent female participants, CAPABLE is committed to gender balance in the composition of invited stakeholders during the three planned stakeholders' workshops.

The consortium appears dedicated to enhancing and monitoring gender diversity in both its existing workforce and recent recruitment activities. Continuous monitoring, transparent reporting, and targeted initiatives can further contribute to sustaining a well-balanced and diverse consortium.

CAPABLE remains devoted to the professional development of female scientists, actively promoting their participation in training and capacity-building activities. As a complement to CAPABLE's robust inclusivity and diversity strategies, the project emphasizes the fair and open recruitment of researchers and employees.



3 Consortium's plan to improve gender balance and minority representation

The CAPABLE consortium aims at improving gender and minority representation through various strategies:

Do a regular Assessments and Accountability:

- Gather data on gender representation at all levels within the consortium at the end of each reporting period.
- Analyse the data to identify areas with the most significant gender and minority imbalances.

Continue to remind clear policies during the project's meetings:

- Develop and communicate clear policies promoting gender equity and diversity.
- Ensure that these policies address hiring, promotion, and work-life balance.

Sponsor diversity and inclusion training and educational initiatives:

- Implement diversity and inclusion training for all members of the consortium.
- Focus on raising awareness of unconscious biases and promoting an inclusive culture.
- Engage all members in discussions about the importance of gender balance.

Regarding this point, we will organize soon a training course around the gender and unconscious bias and diversity. We found several initiatives that could be interesting to fill the gap and to build full awareness about the issue. The main idea is to implement at least one of the following activities during the lifespan of the project:

[EAF Berlin | Diversity in Leadership](#) – it organizes short workshops on unconscious biases and diversity. All trainings are offered online and offline, in English and in German. The idea could be to organize a maximum two hour online workshop/training.

[GE Academy](#) – this is a Horizon 2020 project developing and implementing a high-quality capacity-building programme on gender equality in research, innovation and higher education. The idea could be to organize a one-day online training on “Gender bias in recruitment, promotion and career management”.

The [Dutch Actors Society](#) - this is a theatre company that focuses on the academic and scientific community. They address ethical challenges in scientific integrity, and through humour and insight, they portray the passions, envies, angers, and frustrations within academia, sparking structured discussions among science professionals. The idea could be to organize a one-day in-person training at one of the next project meetings.



Create a Mentorship Program:

- Establish mentorship programs to support the career development of women within the consortium.
- Encourage senior members to actively sponsor and advocate for the advancement of talented women.

In CAPABLE the idea is also to implement a women-to-women mentoring programme for young female scholars. Implementing a women-to-women mentorship program involves careful planning and consideration of the needs and goals of both mentors and mentees: define the objectives; identify target participants; create some guidelines (duration, expectations); match mentors and mentees based on their goals, experiences, and compatibility; organize regular check-ins; analyse achievements within the mentorship program. A successful program implies a keen dedication to supporting the professional development of women in the workplace.

Promote Visibility and Recognition:

- Highlight achievements of women within the consortium through awards, publications, and public recognition.
- Combat gender bias in the recognition and visibility of contributions.

Promote Inclusive Language:

- Encourage the use of inclusive language in communications and documentation.
- Foster a culture where everyone feels respected and valued.

Additionally, each partner institution has its own mandate defined in the “Gender Equality Plan”. This document usually promotes flexible work and family-friends’ policies (introduce flexible work arrangements to accommodate diverse career paths and family responsibilities; promote a culture that values productivity over traditional working hours; support work-life balance to alleviate challenges faced by both men and women).

4 Conclusion

CAPABLE partners have demonstrated so far, a valuable effort in reducing the initial imbalance in the project’s staff involved composition.

Increasing diversity and inclusion through hiring and trying to have gender balanced composition at the stakeholder workshops and dissemination events are two actions implemented.

By adopting a comprehensive approach that includes policies, cultural initiatives, and ongoing assessments, CAPABLE consortium can continue to contribute significantly to improving gender balance and minority representation.



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