

CLOSING THE GENDER GAP AS PART OF CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Priorities and recommendations for a shared agenda

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This brief report aims to provide all the stakeholders with recommendations on how to work on closing the gender gap in order to address the Sustainable Development Goal nº 5 within the corporate sustainability strategy.

The panel ‘Women in Tech Driving Sustainability’ at DwP2023 was co-organized by Women in ESG Portugal (founder Alice Khouri), with the collaboration of Joana Garoupa.

The contributions considered were from the speakers at the event and the participation of the public, who were able to choose, out of 5 actions, which 3 should be prioritized.

KEY MESSAGES

As well pointed out by the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE) in its report of 2023, *“Structural gender inequalities, together with gender norms and roles, shape access to and control over resources, services, information and knowledge, and decision-making. The result is that women and men living in the EU are affected differently by climate change, and often display different behaviours and attitudes in relation to its impacts. They also contribute differently to the causes of climate change, have different preferences for solutions to mitigate climate change, and different options, as well as possibilities, to deal with its consequences.”*

In clear recognition of this reality, the United Nations established the SDG 5, which aims to achieve gender equality by ending all forms of discrimination, violence and any harmful practices against women and girls. It also calls for the full participation of women and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making.

Consistent with the irreversible trend towards an inclusive perspective in the corporate world, in November of 2022 the European Parliament formally adopted the new EU law on gender balance on company boards. By 2026, companies will have to have 40% of the gender underrepresented among non-executive directors or 33% among all directors.

The topic of gender equality is even more relevant in the ESG scenario since it’s both a Social (S) and Governance (G) matter and must be taken into account when making business or institutional decisions in general, promoting economic development in a sustainable and inclusive way.

In this context, digital plays an important role: as enabler of reliable and updated data, and as a way of closing the gender gap if women are also considered in the digital transition all companies will have to make. Especially regarding the expansion of opportunities for life-long learning, upskilling and reskilling are necessary to shatter gender segregation in the labour market and open broader career opportunities.

Although the EU is making strides towards gender equality, only 2 % of its population is close to achieve it. The Gender Equality Index of EU has increased by 1.6 points since the previous release, scoring 70.2 points (out of 100) in 2023, but we still face huge challenges, mainly: gender gaps in unpaid care, efforts to tackle gender segregation in education and the labour market, a gender perspective is often lacking in key decisions on the green transition in areas such as transport and energy, among others.

KEY ACTIONS

- Inform: about the importance of gender equality in sustainability journeys, highlighting the efficiency that achieving SDG 5 can bring in economic and governance terms;
- Measure: the current status of the company or institution with regard to gender equality in leadership positions, remuneration and career advancement opportunities;
- Define: targets and concrete actions to improve on the figures that show a possible gap;
- Collaborate: emphasize active cooperation between technology and all other companies to develop solutions that can help closing the gender gap until 2030.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to materialize the technical contributions of the team of experts and leaders who met at the 2023 summit, we recommend companies to adopt at least those three concrete actions that can be included in companies' ESG strategies:

1. Participation of the underrepresented gender (female for now) in the executive board of companies in excess of the legal quotas required (meaning, above the 33.3% quota for the executive board);
2. Training HR departments to be able to disseminate a culture of feedback and feedforward without gender bias and by talent/competence;
3. Addressing the issue of gender equality and ways to close the gender gap in a broad and informed way (with the support of technical material) and creating discussion groups to encourage employees themselves to suggest concrete measures and actions.



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