

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN



ΜΙΝΩΑ
ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑΚΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ

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Table of Contents

1. Who we are and the rationale for the Gender Equality Plan	3
1.1. Our identity	3
1.2. Why a Gender Equality Plan (GEP)?	4
1.3. Energy as a common good: a right for all, not a privilege for the few	4
1.4. Legal framework and compliance	5
2. Analysis of the existing situation	6
2.1. Methodology for Data Collection and Analysis	6
2.2. Quantitative Mapping of the Community (Gender Profile)	7
2.2.1. Comparative Representation of Participation Levels	7
2.3. Qualitative analysis: challenges, obstacles, and energy poverty	8
2.3.1. The gendered face of energy poverty	8
2.3.2. Time barriers to participation	9
2.3.3. Financial barriers to participation	9
2.3.4. Intersectionality and social inclusion	10
2.4. Diagnostic summary (SWOT Analysis)	10
3. Strategic Action, Governance and Continuous Development Plan	12
3.1. Employment	12
3.2. Governance – Community Composition	14
3.3. Internal operation	14
3.4. Education - training	15
3.5. Governance, monitoring and KPIs framework	16
4. Energy as a lever for Social Justice	17
5. Glossary of Terms	18

1. Who we are and the rationale for the Gender Equality Plan

1.1. Our identity

At Minoan Energy Community, we are building a strong community of citizens and local businesses that, with the support of local government, claims an active role in the energy transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, and aims to do so in an environmentally acceptable and socially solidary manner.

Minoan Energy Community is the first Energy Community in Crete and the largest in Greece, with more than 900 members, a number that is constantly increasing. Our Community, according to the institutional framework governing its operation, is a cooperative that facilitates its members to produce and consume their own electricity while simultaneously securing a satisfactory supplementary income for their families. Minoan Energy Community aims at the production, storage, distribution, and supply of energy, the management of smart grids, and concurrently promotes the social and solidarity economy and innovation in the energy sector. These objectives are achieved through the cogeneration of electricity and heat, rational use, and energy efficiency, contributing at the same time to tackling energy poverty.

In simple terms, Minoan Energy Community aims at all available alternative technologies for energy production from clean sources and energy saving, with multiple benefits for all participants, the local economy, and society. We address everyone without exception: legal entities, small or large businesses, organizations, municipalities, agencies, farmers, households, and every active citizen. Registrations are carried out based on the legal beneficiary of the energy supply regardless of gender, maintaining a diverse base where members from different ethnic backgrounds and social identities coexist.

1.2. Why a Gender Equality Plan (GEP)?

Precisely because Minoan Energy Community addresses "everyone without exception," we must ensure that our internal procedures reflect this value. This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) has been developed by our organization as part of our broader strategy to promote equality, ensure a non-discriminatory working environment, and enhance the participation of all genders in all activities of our Community.

For us, the GEP constitutes a critical tool for achieving institutional changes and creating conditions of equal opportunities, starting from leadership and extending to all our members and actions. Our commitment is clear: we seek the full integration of the principle of gender equality into all our processes, policies, and practices, while simultaneously ensuring the balance between professional and personal life for all our staff and members.

1.3. Energy as a common good: a right for all, not a privilege for the few

At Minoan Energy Community, we firmly believe that energy is not merely a tradable commodity, but a fundamental citizen right. The energy transition cannot be restricted to a closed group of "investors" aiming exclusively at maximizing their capital. On the contrary, it must be an inclusive, democratic process accessible to every member of our society.

Why we choose social participation over exclusion:

- 1. Energy Democracy:** The energy we produce belongs to the Community. When we decide about energy, we decide about the future of our land. We do not allow the concentration of power in the hands of a few; instead, we share the decisions and the benefits with everyone.
- 2. Combating Energy Poverty:** An energy transition that does not take into account the vulnerable members of society (households, the unemployed, low-income families) fails in its primary goal. The Community model ensures that no one is left behind due to economic or social barriers. In this context, we provide active support to earthquake-stricken households in our region following the earthquake of September 27, 2021, in Arkalochori, by offering free energy, while we have

already committed 2% of our total production from photovoltaic parks exclusively for the relief of vulnerable households.

- 3. The GEP as a guarantee of Social Justice:** This Gender Equality Plan is our practical commitment that this "energy democracy" will be real. If we want to be a Community for everyone, we must actively deconstruct the barriers (gendered, economic, social) that have traditionally hindered the participation of women and underrepresented groups in energy developments. Within this framework, Minoan Energy defends social participation without discrimination based on gender identity or expression, sexual orientation (LGBTQI+), ethnic origin, or color, ensuring a safe and inclusive space for every citizen.

Through the GEP, we lay the foundations so that participation in the Minoan Energy Community does not depend on gender, financial status, or social position, but is based on equal contribution and mutual benefit. For us, energy is the power to build a fairer, cleaner, and more humane society.

1.4. Legal framework and compliance

This **Gender Equality Plan** is aligned with current national and European law, ensuring that Minoan Energy Community operates in full compliance with the principles of equality:

- **National Legislation:** Compliance with Law 4604/2019: "Promotion of substantive gender equality" and the provisions of Law 4513/2018 regarding Energy Communities.
- **European Framework:** Alignment with the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.
- **Internal Governance:** The GEP constitutes a supplementary part of our Community's Statutes, binding all members, staff, and governing bodies to adhere to the aforementioned principles.

2. Analysis of the existing situation

2.1. Methodology for Data Collection and Analysis

The present analysis is based on a longitudinal approach, examining the totality of data collected from the founding of the Minoan Energy Community to the present day. Instead of limiting ourselves to a static snapshot of a single year, we chose to analyze our entire member base, which includes approximately 920 active members, in order to understand participation trends, gender ratios, and the evolution of inclusivity within our community over time.

Our methodology was based on the following axes:

1. Data Sources:

- **Membership Registry:** Processing of the community's official registrations, ensuring the protection of personal data (GDPR), to extract demographic information (gender, membership status, geographical distribution).
- **Internal Administrative Records:** Recording the composition of decision-making bodies (Board of Directors, Committees) from foundation to the present.

2. Analysis Framework (Gender-Disaggregated Data): All data were "decomposed" based on gender. The goal was not merely counting, but correlating the data with roles within the community (e.g., simple member vs. member of a governing body vs. action volunteer).

3. Approach to Inclusion: Following the guidelines of the Inclusivity Guidebook, our methodology did not stop at gender. We examined the "profile" of participation in combination with other factors, such as professional activity, origin, age group, and socioeconomic status. In this context, we recognize and incorporate members from different ethnic backgrounds and social identities into our base, in order to identify whether there are groups that are underrepresented or face difficulties in gaining access to the community's benefits.

4. Goal of the Analysis: Utilizing these historical data allows us to identify "gaps" that might not have been apparent in an annual report. Furthermore, it enables us to set realistic and measurable goals (KPIs) for the coming years, based on the actual trajectory of our Community rather than theoretical assumptions.

2.2. Quantitative Mapping of the Community (Gender Profile)

This section presents the quantitative analysis of the composition of the Minoan Energy Community. The data presented in Table 1 serve as the initial point of reference for assessing equality within our Community and record the current situation at the grassroots, administrative, and volunteer levels, in order to define future strategic KPIs.

Table 1: Gender ratio in the Community's shareholding composition.

Category	Total	Women (Count)	Women (%)	Men (Count)	Men (%)
General Membership Composition	920	272	29,57%	602	65,43%
Board of Directors	11	2	18,18%	9	81,82%
Volunteers	68	12	17,65%	56	82,35%
Office Staff	3	1	33,33%	2	66,67%

A noteworthy element of our base's intersectionality is the presence of 10 foreign members (1.09% of the total) as well as 25 vulnerable households (2.72%), a fact that underscores the open character of the Community.

2.2.1. Comparative Representation of Participation Levels

For a more complete understanding of the gender structure, Figure 1 presents a comparison of the percentages of female representation across the different operational levels of the Community. This representation makes clear the point at which maximum intervention is required.

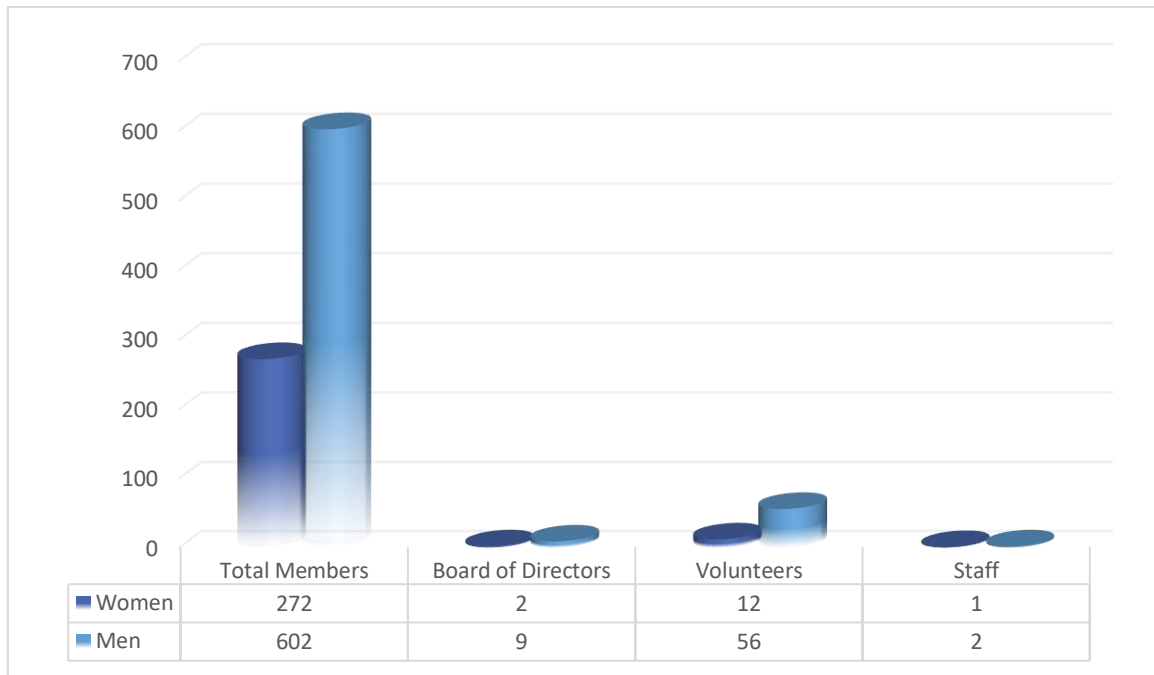


Figure 1: Comparison of female representation percentages across different operational levels of the Community.

2.3. Qualitative analysis: challenges, obstacles, and energy poverty

Beyond gender mapping, the analysis of the Minoan Energy Community focused on identifying the qualitative factors that affect equal participation. This analysis highlights three critical areas, which are analyzed in the following sub-sections.

2.3.1. The gendered face of energy poverty

Our strategy for combating energy insecurity is reinforced by our participation in the approved Green Fund program for the establishment and operation of mechanisms against Energy Poverty. Our approach is based on the premise that poverty disproportionately affects women, especially when other social factors coexist, such as:

- **Women in vulnerable groups:** Data show that women, particularly in single-parent families or elderly women living alone, run the greatest risk, as they often combine low incomes with increased care needs.
- **Earthquake-stricken households:** Our intervention in Arkalochori focuses on supporting those affected, recognizing that women in these households shoulder the greatest burden of crisis management.

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- **Access to information:** To address barriers to information, we utilize the Information & Support Office on Energy Transition issues already operated by our Community. This Office ensures that knowledge about Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and energy-saving measures reaches everyone, including women in rural areas or persons with disabilities.
 - **Large families:** Through the targeted "EKOINO" (Interreg) program, we focus on the relief of low-income large families, linking energy with the effort to address the declining birth rate.

2.3.2. Time barriers to participation

"Time Poverty" emerges as the primary barrier to women's participation, which intensifies depending on the individual's social status:

- **The "Triple Burden":** Women are called upon to balance professional work, family care, and household management. This burden becomes insurmountable for women caring for persons with disabilities or belonging to economically weaker groups without external assistance.
- **Lack of support structures:** The absence of social infrastructure forces women to assume almost exclusively unpaid domestic work, depriving them of the right to social and political action.
- **Inflexible procedures:** In-person meetings during peak hours predominantly exclude women with family responsibilities, as well as members with mobility difficulties or limited means of transportation.

2.3.3. Financial barriers to participation

The analysis demonstrated that the cost of purchasing shares in the energy community can constitute a barrier for vulnerable households.

Strategic Response: The provision for the inclusion of members with reduced or zero cost represents a top-tier action supporting participation. Within this framework, we have allocated 2% of the total energy production from our parks exclusively for supply to vulnerable households, enabling individuals experiencing energy poverty to transition from "passive consumers" into "active participants" in the energy transition.

Our strategy for zero or reduced participation costs is put into practice through programs such as "EKOINO" (Interreg). With a grant reaching up to 80% for the deployment of a

photovoltaic station with a capacity of at least 500 kW, we ensure that the most vulnerable groups, such as low-income large families, become active participants in the green transition without financial burden, while concurrently addressing the demographic challenge of declining birth rates.

2.3.4. Intersectionality and social inclusion

Our analysis recognizes that certain groups, such as women, citizens of diverse cultural backgrounds, persons with disabilities, or members with limited financial resources, may experience multiple layers of discrimination that hinder their access to information and energy benefits. Minoan Energy Community adopts an intersectional approach, seeking to dismantle these barriers through targeted social actions and the gradual development of specialized support structures, such as the Energy Poverty Office. This approach ensures that gender equality is not examined in isolation, but in conjunction with all social identities that constitute our Community.

2.4. Diagnostic summary (SWOT Analysis)

The SWOT analysis that follows summarizes the current state of the Minoan Energy Community regarding gender equality and inclusion. Our strategy focuses on leveraging our strong social base and integrating tools to combat energy exclusion, reinforcing the Community's role as an agent of social justice.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong base of 920 members with a background of social participation and contribution. • Balanced personnel staffing (33.3% women). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low representation of women among volunteers (17.6%) and on the Board of Directors (18.2%). • Traditional property ownership patterns affecting the composition of the membership register (registration based on the legal beneficiary).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusivity with the presence of foreign members (1.09%) • Official commitment of the management to equality and transparency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of specialized data regarding the needs of female members. • Traditional participation patterns (time poverty).
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with European standards (GEP) and participation in international networks. • Attraction of new members through social criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic crisis disproportionately affecting women. • Digital divide hindering access to information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcasing Minoan as a model Energy Community at a European level. • Creation of synergies with local social entities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotypes viewing energy as a "male" sector. • Risk of exclusion of the most vulnerable due to bureaucracy.

3. Strategic Action, Governance and Continuous Development Plan

At Minoan Energy Community, the transition towards energy democracy constitutes a dynamic process that requires the optimal utilization of our human resources. This chapter defines our strategic interventions aimed at empowering the Community, establishing our position as an international model of inclusion and social justice, and achieving gender equality in the Community's processes.

The actions regarding the gender equality approach at Minoan Energy Community are based on the following:

- Recording of statistical data regarding gender equality.
- Promotion of gender equality in employment, diversity management, and the advancement of women to administrative positions.
- Promotion of awareness on gender equality issues among the members of the Community.
- Establishment of a 360° equality culture .
- Ensuring a gender-balanced participatory process, visibility, and communication.
- Support of women in employment and cooperative entrepreneurship.
- Combating all forms of violence and harassment.
- Sharing and evaluating best practices.
- Legal counseling at national and European level for the promotion of gender equality.
- Cooperation with international bodies (e.g., RESCoop.eu) for the promotion of a more balanced environment regarding gender equality issues.

Subsequent sections present specific actions.

3.1. Employment

In the field of employment, aiming to achieve gender equality within the Community, the following measures are introduced:

Measure – Action	Indicator	Responsible	Current status
Full-time employees: 50% men – 50% women	Percentage of employees by men and women	Board of Directors	50% men – 50% women
Provision of parental leave under the same terms to men and women	Number of parental leave days per year for men and women	Community President	No requests
Clarification in calls for new job vacancies that applications from all genders and ethnic diversity are encouraged, with an explicit mention that no photograph should be included in the candidates' curriculum vitae	Job announcements	Board of Directors	In effect
Provision of part-time positions to parents	Job announcements	Board of Directors	In effect

3.2. Governance – Community Composition

Regarding the Governance and Composition of the Community, the following measures are introduced:

Measure – Action	Indicator	Responsible	Current status
Approach an equal number of male and female members in the composition of the Community	Percentage of Community members by men and women	President – Scientific Team – Board of Directors	65.4% men – 29.6% women
Composition of the Board of Directors with 5 or 6 male members and 6 or 5 female members respectively	Number of male – female members of the Board of Directors	General Assembly	81.8% men – 18.2% women

3.3. Internal operation

Regarding the internal operation of the Community, the following measures are introduced:

Measure – Action	Indicator	Responsible	Current status
Designation of a trusted person, responsible for handling any potentially reported incidents of harassment, abuse, or any form of violence in the workplace	Recording of incidents	Board of Directors	In effect
Micro-volunteering actions	Number of actions per year	President – Scientific Team	In effect
Flexibility of participation: establishment of family-friendly scheduling for assemblies and provision of hybrid attendance options	Schedules & number of meetings	President – Scientific Team	In effect

Particularly in the sector of volunteering, we pioneer by adopting the **micro-volunteering** model. We design flexible actions that require limited time, allowing members with

increased social and family responsibilities to contribute substantially without burdening their personal life. This approach is accompanied by targeted communication campaigns that highlight the community's female volunteers, promoting strong models of participation.

3.4. Education - training

We develop **mentoring programs**, where the experience of our executives is transferred to new members who wish to assume leadership roles, thereby strengthening the continuity and cohesion of the Community. Specifically, the following measures are introduced:

Measure – Action	Indicator	Responsible	Current status
Organization of specialized seminars for the recognition of unconscious biases and introduction of a Zero Tolerance Protocol against any form of discrimination	Number of seminars per year – Protocol	Scientific team	By the end of 2026
Awareness raising and promotion of gender equality within the Community, in the framework of conferences and actions. At least 2 events per year	Number of conferences per year	Scientific team	In effect
Posts featuring stories and testimonials of female and male members of the Community reflecting their experience within the Community	Number of posts	Scientific team	In effect
Reference to the key objectives of the gender equality plan in Community presentations	Number of events	Scientific team	In effect
Composition of the Community's speaker panels in events with an equal number of male and female members	Number of events and male – female members	Scientific team	In effect

3.5. Governance, monitoring and KPIs framework

To ensure the effectiveness of the plan, we establish an **Equality Committee** and designate an Equality Officer with the responsibility of coordinating and monitoring the actions. Our progress will be evaluated through specific key performance indicators (KPIs), which will focus on increasing representation within the Community's governing bodies and expanding the volunteer base.

The monitoring of our progress will be based on the gradual adoption of evaluation tools, such as future Gender Profile Reports (GPRs), which will be drafted in full compliance with the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation. Our Community commits to launching information actions and awareness seminars, as well as publishing periodic progress reports that will demonstrate the evolution of our goals in practice. This plan constitutes a living document that will be regularly reviewed and enriched, ensuring that Minoan Energy Community remains at the forefront of social and energy justice, serving as a source of inspiration for the entire cooperative movement..

4. Energy as a lever for Social Justice

Minoan Energy Community is not merely a producer of clean energy; it is a living organization aiming at the democratization of resources and social well-being. This **Gender Equality Plan** constitutes our roadmap for an inclusive community.

With the establishment of the Energy Poverty Office and the support of the Green Fund, we take a decisive step: we transform the energy transition from a technical process into an act of solidarity. We commit that no woman, no vulnerable household, and no member of our region —regardless of ethnic origin, color, sexual orientation, or gender identity— will be left behind in the darkness of energy insecurity.

Providing access to projects at a reduced or zero cost is not a simple provision, but an investment in dignity and equal participation. At **Minoan Energy Community**, we firmly believe that "green" development is genuine only when it is just, inclusive, and gender-balanced.

We continue together, shaping a future where energy will be a right for all, without exceptions.

5. Glossary of Terms

This section defines the core concepts used in this Gender Equality Plan, in order to ensure a common understanding among all members and stakeholders.

- **Gender Equality Plan (GEP):** A strategic document and operational framework setting specific goals, actions, and indicators to achieve institutional gender balance, ensure non-discrimination, and promote equal opportunities within an organization.
- **Energy Democracy:** A political and social concept advocating for a transition to renewable energy where infrastructure, production, and decision-making power are structurally held by citizens, local communities, and cooperatives rather than centralized corporations.
- **Intersectionality:** An analytical framework used to understand how various social identities—such as gender, race, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability—overlap and interact, creating unique, compounding layers of discrimination, exclusion, or disadvantage.
- **Energy Poverty:** A condition where a household or individual faces an inability to access, afford, or secure adequate energy services—such as heating, cooling, lighting, and power—necessary for a decent standard of living, often driven by low income, high energy costs, and poor energy efficiency.
- **Time Poverty:** A structural barrier where an individual’s time is almost completely consumed by combined obligations of paid employment and mandatory, unpaid labor—such as domestic tasks and caregiving—leaving insufficient time for personal development, leisure, or active community and social participation.
- **Triple Burden:** A sociological term referring to the multi-layered role historically imposed on women, who are concurrently responsible for reproductive work (unpaid domestic labor and caregiving), productive work (paid professional employment), and community management tasks.
- **Unconscious Bias:** Social stereotypes, prejudices, or deeply ingrained cultural beliefs about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness, heavily influencing automatic behaviors, organizational decisions, and recruitment patterns.

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- **Micro-volunteering:** A modern volunteerism model involving short-term, low-commitment, and highly flexible tasks that require minimal time and can often be completed remotely, allowing individuals with demanding social or family duties to actively contribute without burdening their personal life.
 - **Gender-Disaggregated Data:** Statistical quantitative or qualitative information collected, processed, and analyzed separately for women and men, allowing organizations to measure gender-specific disparities, trends, imbalances, and impacts.
 - **Substantive Gender Equality:** A legal and social principle moving beyond formal, statutory equality on paper, demanding equal outcomes, equal access to resources, and the active elimination of systemic, historical barriers that cause practical disadvantage.
 - **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Quantifiable, measurable values used to evaluate the success and progress of an organization or a specific plan (such as the GEP) in reaching its strategic targets and operational goals.
 - **Gender Profile Report (GPR):** An evaluative tools and reporting mechanism that assesses, records, and monitors the representation, roles, and status of genders within an organization over a specific period.
 - **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):** The strict European Union legal framework governing data protection and privacy for all individuals within the EU, ensuring the secure and transparent processing of personal identifiers.
 - **Vulnerable Households:** Residential units or families facing high risks of social exclusion, financial hardship, or energy insecurity due to specific socioeconomic vulnerabilities, such as low income, unemployment, single-parent structures, or health issues.
 - **Zero Tolerance Protocol:** An organizational policy and strict behavioral code specifying that no form of discrimination, harassment, abuse, or violence will be overlooked, permitted, or left without immediate institutional and legal consequences.