

# CLOSING THE GENDER GAP IN THE MODERN WORKPLACE



CULTURE OF  
INCLUSION IN  
ENTERPRISES



Co-funded by  
the European Union

# EQUALISER PROJECT

# ABOUT THE PROJECT

The EQUALISER project strives to promote **gender equality** in the modern **workplace** by assisting private firms in implementing gender mainstreaming strategies.



# ABOUT THE PROJECT

EQUALISER aims to:

1. Raise awareness about workplace gender inequalities
2. Inform about the needs and gaps in organizational structure, processes, and practices contributing to this issue
3. Encourage decision-makers to make gender mainstreaming a continuous organizational process
4. Integrate a long-term change in the business culture, with fewer stereotypes and discriminatory behaviors
5. Create a safe and secure environment in which all employees can thrive and grow



# THIS PRESENTATION

The material presented is part of **EQUALISER project** and seeks to support the employees of an enterprise in their working context.

The material is developed in order to help the target group overcoming **gender knowledge gaps and stereotypes** in order to transform the working environment and change the relationship dynamics in the workspace.



# MODULES

Module 1 - Discovering Gender Equality Concepts & Principles

Module 2 - Beyond the Norm: Shattering Gender Stereotypes

Module 3 — Balancing Act: Women as Employees and Caregivers

Module 4 — From Glass Ceiling to Open Skies

Module 5 — Respect & Resilience: Tackling Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

# MODULES

**Module 6** - Bridging the Divide: Understanding and Addressing the Gender Pay Gap

**Module 7** - Unleashing Women's Career Prospects

**Module 8** - A Catalyst for Change: Exploring EU Policies for Workplace Gender Equality

**Module 9** - Mindful Message: Gender-Sensitive Communicate

**Module 10:** A Practical Guide Addressing Gender Inequality Conflict & Promoting Respectful behavior



# MODULE 4

## From Glass Ceiling to Open Skies – Leadership & Decision Making





# MODULE 4 - TOPICS OUTLINE

- 01** Understanding the Glass-Ceiling Effect
- 02** A Guide to Break the Glass-Ceiling
- 03** Leadership & Inclusive Management
- 04** Decision –Making & Bias Mitigation
- 05** Activities
- 06** Conclusion – Summary
- 07** References

# Introduction



Source: Ifsa\_eegais (managers)

Research studies found that women, despite their level of education, experiences, and skills, were affected by the **glass ceiling effect** - a social barrier that prevents women from advancing to positions of power and responsibility and being promoted to higher managerial positions *due to their gender*. They specifically demonstrate that only 1 manager out of 3 in the EU is a woman and even fewer hold senior management positions.

# Introduction



Source: Ifsa\_eegais (managers)

Furthermore, research indicates that detecting this prejudice is challenging due to the fact that existing fair access protocols prevent explicit discrimination against women. This encompasses norms and stereotypes that unfold through practices, actions, information, processes, or mindsets that are often not immediately noticeable. Finally, they reported that the concept of the glass ceiling was notably more observable in **high-level executive and senior managerial roles.**

# From Glass Ceiling to Open Skies – Leadership & Decision Making



**As a result, this module aims to:**

- ✓ Help employers avoid or fight against the glass ceiling
- ✓ Help employers to build confidence in a woman's ability as a manager and leader
- ✓ Help employers identify the leadership traits of women employee
- ✓ Help employers use appropriate leadership styles to promote equal opportunities in managerial roles and decision-making

# TOPIC 1: Understanding the glass-ceiling effect

## Glass Ceiling Effect Examples

- ❖ Promotion management position to male candidates because a woman is **pregnant** or looking to start a **family**
- ❖ **Excluded** or lack women employees from important, **decision-making** executive meetings
- ❖ Do not provide women employees with the **proper resources and tools** to succeed at their job
- ❖ **Reassigned** women employees to different projects so male coworkers have better opportunities
- ❖ **Exclude** women employees **from leadership training workshops** or networking events
- ❖ Allow women employees to be subjected to degrading and **disrespectful comments** based on their gender

# TOPIC 1: Understanding the glass-ceiling effect



## WHY IT HAPPENS?

### A. Situational Factors

- The **“male-oriented” organizational culture and related biases**, that promote the idea of men being more disciplined, committed, and therefore suitable for executive company roles.
- Based on the **social role theory, beliefs** that managers should have more “masculine” traits (e.g. being authoritarian, independent, and competitive) undermine the capabilities of women managers who is usually been seen as more sensitive, empathetic, and team player.
- **Societal gender role stereotypes** imply that women face a greater work-life conflict since they prioritize family responsibilities and motherhood.
- **Implicit perception** that a woman manager is a serious candidate for a promotion if she already occupies a managerial position and participates in the development activities of the company.

# TOPIC 1: Understanding the glass-ceiling effect



## WHY IT HAPPENS?

### B. Interpersonal Factors

- Women seem to be assigned **positions with lower visibility**, limiting their opportunities to connect with high-ranking individuals and develop social networks
- Queen bee syndrome - This syndrome illustrates how some female executives who have risen to the top believe they have had to work hard to get there. They believe that other **women should work just as hard** to achieve success.
- The **lack of** high-level organizational **mentors** for women employees undermines their career progression, as they lack an important source of information

# TOPIC 1: Understanding the glass-ceiling effect



## CONSEQUENCES

- ❖ Widening the gender pay gap
- ❖ Affects career trajectory
- ❖ Impacts, health and well-being
- ❖ Incompatibilities between professional and family roles (inter-role conflict)
- ❖ Undermines personal characteristics like self-efficacy, confidence, optimism, and energy
- ❖ Stress increase
- ❖ Lack of work engagement
- ❖ Increase of intentions to quit or change workplace
- ❖ Reduce job satisfaction



# TOPIC 2: A guide to break the glass-ceiling effect

## ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDE-PREVENT OR BREAK THE GLASS-CEILING EFFECT

### 1. Blind screening in the recruitment and promotion process

-Blind application processes minimize unconscious bias in recruitment by focusing on skills and experience rather than revealing gender or race.

### 2. Implement training against bias and stereotyping

-Conduct internal sessions or hire diversity experts to foster inclusive conversations. Address implicit biases and norms through team training.

### 3. Offer Leadership Development Tailored for women

- Implement tailored leadership development initiatives that provide training, mentoring, and resources specifically aimed at helping women and other underrepresented groups advance into leadership roles.



# TOPIC 2: A guide to break the glass-ceiling effect

## ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDE – PREVENT OR BREAK THE GLASS CEILING EFFECT

### 4. Organizational policies for Representation in leadership

Actively work towards increasing the representation of women and diverse groups in leadership positions. Visible role models inspire others to aim for those positions.

### 5. Zero Tolerance for Discrimination

Enforce strict policies against discrimination and harassment, and ensure that employees have avenues to report such incidents without fear of retaliation.

### 6. Regular Review and Progress Tracking

Continuously monitor progress in achieving diversity and inclusion goals. Regularly assess the effectiveness of initiatives and make necessary adjustments.



Some leaders are  
born women

-Geraldi Ferraro-

# TOPIC 3: Leadership & Inclusive Management

## What is leadership ??

Leadership is a set of behaviors that facilitate the alignment of people to their collective direction, in order to execute strategic plans and to continually renew an organization



## What is INCLUSIVE leadership ??

Is an approach of leading ensuring that all team members are:

- Treated equitably
- Feel a sense of belonging and value
- Have the resources and support they need to achieve their full potential

**Inclusive leaders** are those who are aware of their own prejudices and actively seek out and evaluate diverse points of view in order to make better decisions and cooperate more successfully with others.

# TOPIC 3: Leadership & Inclusive Management

## What are the benefits for an organization with inclusive leadership??

### 1. Broader range of perspectives

-By creating a team of varied groups of employees and leaders from diverse backgrounds, leaders can enrich perspectives, experiences, and opinions, helping in faster and more effective problem-solving and business decisions.

### 2. Recruit from a larger pool of talent

- By eradicating bias in hiring teams and senior levels, you guarantee that skilled candidates won't be rejected due to attributes like gender. This expands your pool of qualified candidates for hiring.

### 3. Business Performance Enhancement

-[McKinsey](#) discovered that diversified organizations were 15% more likely to outperform the mean financially, as their employees were feeling welcome and happy and thus, were more invested in their work.

### 4. Lower Turn-Over

-Included and valued employees are more likely to be loyal to their organization.

# TOPIC 3: Leadership & Inclusive Management

## Characteristics of Inclusive Leaders

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- ❖ Team players
- ❖ Empathetic
- ❖ Understandable and able to adapt to norms or diversity differences
- ❖ Excellent communicators and good listeners
- ❖ Have high self-awareness of their own biases and weakness
- ❖ They combat old-fashioned paternalistic leadership styles



# TOPIC 3: Leadership & Inclusive Management

## Strategies for Developing/Improving Inclusive Leadership

### ❖ **Become aware of your employees' diversity**

Creating an inclusive environment requires a commitment to continuous learning and knowing the people around you. By doing so, you will be able to use different leadership strategies to motivate and support each person on the team.

### ❖ **Lead with vulnerability**

Knowing your own implicit biases and allowing people to know that you are not infallible create trust, and build strong relationships

### ❖ **Establish relevant norms within the company**

Establish norms of active consultation and participation, which drive shared decision-making within a team or organization.

# TOPIC 3: Leadership & Inclusive Management

## Strategies for Developing/Improving Inclusive Leadership

### ❖ Ask for feedback

Feedback will allow you to receive positive criticism in order to know where to focus and what needs to be changed in your approach to improve your inclusive leadership skills

### ❖ Promote Transparent Communication

Actively listening guarantees that everyone in a team can be heard which fosters an inclusive management style that values diverse viewpoints, promotes trust, and enhances collaboration, ultimately leading to better decision-making and overall team performance.

### ❖ Be Strict with any form of discrimination

In order to foster a respectful, diverse, and harmonious work environment that benefits employees and the organization



# TOPIC 4: Decision-Making & Bias Mitigation

## Decision-Making

The process of choosing the *best option* from among multiple options. It is an *essential ability* that individuals and organizations utilize to solve difficulties, capitalize on opportunities, and achieve their objectives. Assessing information, considering various outcomes, and selecting the option that aligns with aims and values are all part of effective decision-making.



# TOPIC 4: Decision-Making & Bias Mitigation

When making decisions **biases** can manifest in various ways. These biases can significantly impact the quality of decision-making and may lead to suboptimal or unfair outcomes. Recognizing these biases is an important step in mitigating their effects and making more rational and fair decisions.

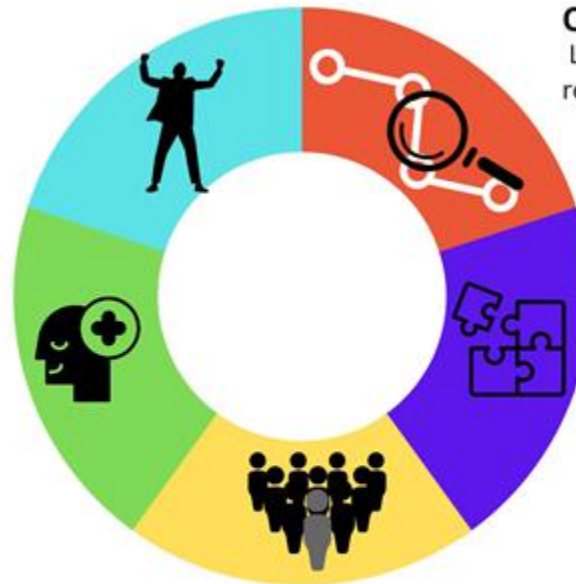
Some common workplace cognitive-biases that influence decision-making include:

## OVERCONFIDENCE

Lead individuals to overestimate their abilities and knowledge, leading to poor decision making

## HALO EFFECT

We observe a positive attribute of someone and we use it to assess everything else about that person



## CONFIRMATION BIAS

Look for, interpret, focus or remember data in a way that confirms our perceptions

## AFFINITY BIAS

Tend to favour people who share similar traits, interests, backgrounds and experiences with us.

**INTER-GROUP BIAS**  
Favour people who are perceived as part of our group

Retrieve from Mercer - "5 Cognitive Biases that Sabotage Gender Diversity in Hiring"

# TOPIC 4: Strategies for Bias Mitigation and Inclusive Decision-Making

- 1. Collect the Necessary Information:** Gather relevant data, facts, and insights related to the decision in order to ensure that you have a comprehensive understanding of the factors at play.
- 2. Set Your Goals:** Determine the goals and objectives you aim to achieve through the decision and set priorities.
- 3. Generate Alternatives:** Brainstorm and create a list of potential courses of action or solutions. Encourage creativity and open-minded thinking to choose from various options.
- 4. Evaluate Alternatives:** Assess each alternative against the defined objectives and criteria. Evaluate the pros and cons of each alternative, weighing the benefits against the drawbacks.
- 5. Make the Decision:** Select the alternative that best aligns with your objectives and assessment.

# TOPIC 4: Strategies for Bias Mitigation and Inclusive Decision-Making

- 6. Implement the chosen alternative:** Develop a plan of action and execute it effectively, considering the necessary resources and timeline.
- 7. Monitor and Adjust:** Monitor the outcomes of your decision. Evaluate whether the desired results are being achieved and be prepared to make adjustments if needed.
- 8. Reflect and Learn:** Analyze the results, and the effectiveness of the decision, and identify lessons for future decision-making.
- 9. Always Seek Feedback:** Seek feedback from the relevant people who were affected by the decision and aim to learn from their perspectives and experiences.
- 10. Continuous Improvement:** Use the insights gained from the decision-making process to improve your future decision-making skills. Apply lessons learned to enhance your ability to make accurate decisions over time.

# ACTIVITIES

## Activity 1 – “Breaking the Glass-Ceiling Effect Workshop ”

### This activity aims to:

- Introduce the concept of the glass-ceiling effect and its effects
- Creating a glass-ceiling-breaking activity action plan
- Promote real-life examples of strategies that can be implemented in any working setting
- Encourage equal treatment for all employees despite their gender



The “Breaking the Glass-Ceiling Effect Workshop ” is a 2 hours interactive session targeting employers, and it is designed to bring awareness related to the glass-ceiling effect that is prevalent in the working environment as well as to create an action plan tailor to the company’s needs.

# ACTIVITIES

## Activity 1 Guidelines

### “Breaking the Glass – Ceiling Effect Workshop”

**Topics Covered:** Definition of, causes of, implications of the glass-ceiling effect and real-world examples and strategies to break it via setting an action plan.

**Skills Gained:** Deep knowledge regarding the phenomenon of the glass ceiling in the workplace, practical knowledge on how to break this effect, empathy enhancement

**Duration:** 2 Hour

**Venue:** Organizations/Company Premises or partner organization premises

**Requirements:**

Computers or smartphones

Video presentation equipment

# ACTIVITIES

## “Breaking the Glass-Ceiling Effect Workshop”

**Energizer (10 min):** Participants should participate in rounds saying a word that comes to their mind related to the glass ceiling effect as fast as possible. If a participant says the same word or a word with the same meaning as someone else then it gets eliminated. Participants only have 3 minutes to say as many words as possible and the person/s who will not be eliminated is the winner/s of the activity.

**Presentation (30 mins):** This module can be utilized in order to deepen the knowledge and understanding of employers related to the glass-ceiling effect and its impact on their employees and organization

**Shaky companies - Case study game (20mins):** 30 colored upside-down plastic glasses should be aligned in rows of 6 and columns of 6 on a table. 12 glasses should be empty and the rest should have attached a paper either including a bomb drawing or a case study of breaking the glass-ceiling effect in the workplace. Thy case studies can be inspired via this website: <https://ripplematch.com/career-advice/companies-invested-in-the-success-of-women-at-work-d819cbob/>. The participants should be divided into teams and choose a glass. The glass will be turn and if a case study appears then the team earns 5 points the person should read that case study out loud, and continue choosing glasses. If a bomb appears then the team loses their turn as well as 3 points and the other team plays . If an empty glass turns then no points are added and the team keeps to play.

# ACTIVITIES

## “Breaking the Glass-Ceiling Effect Workshop”

Developing an Action Plan (1 hour): Participants would have to come up with a specific goal targeting breaking the glass ceiling effect in their company or improving already existing policies, actions, etc. To do so, they should create a detailed action plan (<https://www.smartsheet.com/develop-plan-action-free-templates>) that can be later revised and implemented in the company.

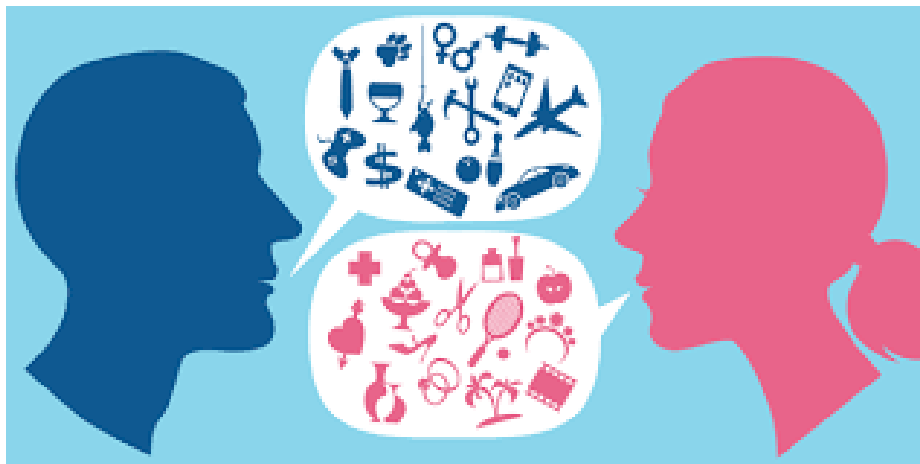


# ACTIVITIES

## Activity 2 – "Unveiling Minds: Shattering Implicit Biases Workshop"

### This activity aims to:

- Bring awareness related to implicit gender biases and their consequences in the workplace
- Encourage self-reflection
- Teach strategies that can be used to fight biases in the workplace
- Promote empathy



The "Unveiling Minds: Shattering Implicit Biases Workshop " is a 1.5-hour interactive session targeting employers, and it is designed to bring awareness related to implicit biases that are prevalent in the working environment.

# ACTIVITIES

## Activity 2 Guidelines

### “Unveiling Minds: Shattering Implicit Biases Workshop”

**Topics Covered:** Types of biases and how to break them for inclusive leadership and effective decision-making

**Skills Gained:** Deep knowledge regarding (implicit) biases, empathy promotion, awareness of biases and how they affect decision-making

**Duration:** 1.5 Hour

**Venue:** Organizations/Company Premises or partner organization premises

**Requirements:**

Computers or smartphones

Video presentation equipment

# ACTIVITIES

## Unveiling Minds: Shattering Implicit Biases Workshop

### Ice-breaker: (10 min)

Participants are instructed to solve the following problem - "A father and son were involved in a car accident in which the father was killed and the son was seriously injured. The father was pronounced dead at the scene of the accident and his body was taken to a local morgue. The son was taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital and was immediately wheeled into an emergency operating room. A surgeon was called. Upon arrival and seeing the patient, the attending surgeon exclaimed "Oh my God, it's my son!" Can you explain this?"

Solution -The surgeon is the boy's mother.

This exercise leads well into an ensuing discussion on the automaticity of stereotypes and the distinction between explicit and implicit bias.

### Activity 1 - <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html> (15 min)

A proven technique for enhancing awareness of one's unconscious bias via the Implicit Association Test (IAT). This test measures the reaction time of individuals to a series of words or pictures presented on a computer screen. This activity is repeated numerous times and the average reaction time for a correct response is recorded. Differential reaction times are evidence of implicit (unconscious) gender bias, and the greater the difference in reaction times between the two tests, the greater those implicit stereotypical associations.

### Presentation (60 min)

<https://internationalwim.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/50Ways-Bias-presentation-Set-1.pptx>

Use these pre-developed PPT slides to bring awareness related to gender implicit biases and teach leaders ways of fighting biases in the workplace.

After the presentation, encourage open discussion on the key learning and emotions evoke by the activity.



# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the glass ceiling effect exerts a profound impact on women employees, resulting in adverse consequences across multiple domains, including their professional performance, mental well-being, and physical health. The emergence of this effect is influenced by a combination of situational and organizational factors, yet a multitude of strategies exists to dismantle its barriers effectively.

Moreover, embracing an inclusive leadership approach stands as a promising solution that ensures equitable treatment, fosters a sense of belonging and value among all team members, and provides the necessary resources and support for them to realize their full potential. This approach not only benefits the company but also enhances the overall well-being and productivity of its workforce.

Finally, this module has highlighted the significance of effective decision-making and shed light on prevalent workplace biases, underlining the importance of awareness and mitigation in achieving fair and objective outcomes in the workplace.

# SUMMARY

## You have learned:

- ❖ The importance of knowing and breaking the glass ceiling effect
- ❖ The definition, cause, and consequence of the glass ceiling effect
- ❖ Strategies to implement in an organization to break the glass ceiling effect
- ❖ The definition of (inclusive) leadership
- ❖ The benefits of inclusive leadership
- ❖ The characteristics of inclusive leaders
- ❖ Strategies to develop inclusive leadership practices
- ❖ What decision-making is
- ❖ Various biases that exist in an organizational environment
- ❖ Strategies for elimination of biases and enhancement of inclusive decision-making

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