

Veas AS' Gender Equality Plan

This document contains Veas AS' plan for gender equality and is applicable to the entire group. The plan was approved by Veas' management team on 21 August 2023. The document sets out our commitment, ambition, and targets linked to our work to promote equality, diversity and inclusion within the organisation, as well as important initiatives designed to achieve this ambition.

Our Head of Administration is responsible for our work with equality, diversity and inclusion. She is supported in the implementation of actions and goals by Veas' management team, middle managers and employee representatives. It is our opinion that we have the sufficient resources and expertise to successfully execute this plan.

Our ambition

Veas AS was incorporated on the 1st of January 2022. Prior to that time, Veas AS was organized as an intermunicipal cooperation under the name of Vestfjorden Avløpsselskap, established in 1976. On 8th March 1982, Norway's largest wastewater treatment plant was operational. We are today an active contributor in making the Oslo fjord a healthy fjord, as well as Veas utilize the resources in wastewater. Our employees are our biggest resource and consist today of 100 individuals with a broad background and personal markings. Our diversity statement is:

We believe that equality, inclusion and diversity are a strength. We endeavour to hire employees with different skills, competence, life experience and perspectives to contribute to even better task solving. We will make arrangements for employees who have special requirements (?). Current facilitation can be, for example, technical aids, adaptation of furniture or changes to routines, tasks and working hours.

To strengthen our work within this topic, we decided to carry out the process of being certified for "Equal Working Life". This is a certification scheme designed by Agder County municipality and is certified by an external audit company. We were approved on the 8th of June 2023. We also fulfil our obligation to initiate activity and report pursuant to the Norwegian Equal Opportunities and Anti-Discrimination Act (*Likestillings- og diskrimineringsloven*).

The current situation

The proportion of women among our employees is 33%. The CEO of Veas is female and among our managers 40% are female. Two of our departments have an even gender balance. Four men and one woman work part time, all voluntary. Two women and twelve men have temporary positions. Ten of these are part of a public apprenticeship scheme. Two are related to work training and the last two are substitutes. Only one employee is currently

on parental leave. Our analysis of pay levels among all employees did not reveal pay differences attributable to gender. For more details, please see our Sustainability Report for 2022.

Risk assessment

We have been working actively to advance equality, diversity and inclusion for the past seven years. This has been a joint effort between management, union representatives and safety representatives. We have conducted and revised a risk assessment to prevent discrimination and to ensure that we promote diversity. Our areas of focus have been equal pay, life phase, full time employment, recruitment and career, facilitation and work environment.

The risk assessment identified nine risks for discrimination:

- Lack of implementation
- The work environment
- Poor recruitment guidelines
- Possibility for work/life balance
- Promotion and development initiatives
- Distribution of work tasks/areas of responsibility, salary determination and awarding of benefits
- Facilitation
- Harassment and violence from colleagues or others at work
- Physical aspects of our work place

The following were identified as causes to these risks:

- Lack of anchoring by the management and/or that the company is not involved
- Age, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, political views, religious beliefs, functional impairment, part time or temporary employment, ethnicity
- Language and wording that unconsciously excludes applicants, screening on subjective basis or recruitment performed without proper involvement
- Prejudices, lack of adapted equipment or facilities, lack of steering documents, lack of involvement of union representatives and safety representatives or favouring
- The nature of our process: use and storage of chemicals, biological health hazard, physically demanding tasks and hazardous gases.

Actions

Our work with equality, diversity and inclusion is integrated in Veas' operations, our management system and is a part of the company's overall sustainability work. In 2023 we performed training among our employees in what we are doing to prevent discrimination and ensure diversity. We also had a cross-sectional project group that participated in diversity training and did dilemma training related to previously mentioned areas of focus. The company has a close cooperation with our union representatives and safety representatives, which are selected by the employees. At least once a year, Veas AS evaluates the use of part time and temporary positions with the union representatives.

We have also revised our governing documents within recruiting, employee development and employee appraisal. When we recruit new employees or current employees are given new tasks or responsibility, we ensure that qualified candidates view themselves as eligible and are assessed on objective and equal criteria. To ensure a successful onboarding, we have made changes in our procedure for the welcoming and inclusion of new employees. This includes for example an emphasis on our ethical guidelines that among other things ensures respectful conduct. This is also mandatory for our suppliers. In addition, all employees are informed about our policy and guideline for harassment and violence, stating our expected behaviour, how employees can report instances of harassment and violence and how any such instances will be handled by management.

Our employees have flex time to better balance everyday life. We have little overtime and closely monitor the use of overtime and discuss the amount of overtime with the union representatives throughout the year. If needed, all employees can work from home for an agreed period of time. Employees without personal computers can borrow a laptop and also work from home with arranged work tasks. We also emphasize arranged work tasks for employees with temporary and permanent physical and mental challenges, as well as lifting equipment and elevators so that physical limitations do not have an impact on work ability.

To insure that everyone who comes in contact with chemicals, hazardous gases and biological health hazard are safe from harm, we have strict rules and guidelines in place for personal protective equipment. Safety data sheets exist for all chemicals, stored in an online system - easily available for all employees. We also have steering documents which clearly state how to perform work tasks that require extra protection. We replace hazardous chemicals with less hazardous chemicals if possible and monitor exposure to chemicals that may cause cancer and may damage fertility and an unborn child. All employees are offered vaccines to protect against certain viral diseases and our occupational health service follow up employees who in their work are exposed to a health risk.

In everyday life our safety representatives are the employees' support system and spokesperson if they experience anything at work that is hazardous to their health, safety or well being in the work place. They also perform safety audits of the work place on a regular basis.

Further initiatives

Veas' commitment to an equal work life is a continuous focus that affects all of our processes since our employees are the foundation of our company. To further strengthen our work with equality, diversity and inclusion we have identified the following initiatives to be performed over the next years.

- Communicate our commitment to equality in our company strategy
- Continue with offering work training for people who have either not had job training, or have been without employment for a long or short period
- A new revision of our risk assessment to prevent discrimination and to ensure that we promote diversity
- Perform a Work Environment Survey in the autumn of 2023 and compare with results from survey performed autumn 2021. Revise the results with involvement from the whole company
- Follow up implementation of interview with pregnant employees and employees returning from parental leave
- Assess senior level for the mechanics department ?
- Implement a position structure

- Evaluate our pay level
- Manager training

Goals

Our analysis to uncover gender inequality has not yet uncovered any structural or cultural obstacles to gender equality. We recognize that our gender balance is not where it could be and our goal is to have more women employed than the current level – especially in our maintenance department. There a few women represented in this field of work, so we will focus on communicating to students and those already with a technical og mechanical career that our company meet their professional and personal needs and that they will thrive in our work place.

When we have peformed an evaluation of our pay level, we will be better equipped to assess if we need to take actions to secure equal pay. Our goal is that any inequalities in pay are only related to objective factors.

The pending Work Environment Survey will evaluate both physical and mental aspects of our work environment. The goal is to have the same high level of participation as last time and that we have a score higher than 70 on the parameter “Organisation Culture”.

Renew our certificate for “Equal Working Life”.

Progress reports

We will use our Quality Assurance System to develop, revise and implement documents, guidelines and procedures that support our work for equality. The same system also holds the risk assessment we have performed and an ongoing revision of this as we perform more actions and possibly identify new risks and actions. Every year we will include a gender equality statement in our Sustainability Report where we state the gender balance in areas such as employment, pay and managers.

By seeking a renewal of our certificate for “Equal Working Life” we will have an external check of our work with gender equality to make sure we keep on track.


Ragnhild Borchgrevink
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