



Lisbon School
of Economics
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Universidade de Lisboa

MASTER
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND
COOPERATION

MASTER'S FINAL WORK
DISSERTATION

TRANSPARENCY AND GENDER EQUALITY IN
SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING: COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS
FROM THE GRI AND ESRS FRAMEWORKS

MARIANA RIBEIRO BARCELOS DE SOUZA

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*To my parents, who give me breath, and to
my friends, who always wait for me at the
finish line — May every race be run on
equal ground.*

GLOSSARY

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

CSRD – Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive

EFRAG- European Financial Reporting Advisory Group

ESRS – European Sustainability Reporting Standards

EU- European Union

GM – Gender Mainstreaming

GRI – Global Reporting Initiative

HCM – Human Capital Management

ISO – International Organization for Standardization

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

UN – United Nations

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to understand how gender equality is addressed in sustainability reporting by comparing two leading frameworks: the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS). We consider that corporate transparency plays a vital role in advancing the Sustainable Development Agenda, tackling pressing social issues such as workplace gender equality. Using a qualitative and inductive approach, the study applies Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA) to evaluate how each framework incorporates gender-relevant disclosures across five thematic areas: workforce composition, pay equity, training and capacity building, work-life balance, and governance-level diversity. The findings show that both frameworks demonstrate a commitment to gender-disaggregated data, while the potential for substantive change lies in a gender mainstreaming approach, with the integration of gender equality policies and strategy in the reporting. Moving forward from the voluntary and descriptive characteristics of the GRI framework, the ESRS, adopted in the context of the CSRD establishes more robust and policy-aligned disclosures.

Keywords: Gender Equality; Sustainable Development, SDGs, GRI, ESRS, CSR, Sustainability Reporting.

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1. Introduction

As a result of the growing importance of the role business organizations can play in contributing to social, economic and environmental aspects of the community in which they operate, there is a rising concern about transparency and accountability of the corporate sector (Hossain et al, 2016), which demands the world's largest companies to demonstrate their commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR). Corporate practices such as CSR and sustainability reporting¹ are increasingly recognized as mechanisms through which the private sector contributes to sustainable development (Alsayegh et al, 2023), with reporting frameworks providing foundations to ensure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To support this increasing need of companies to disclose their social sustainability performance, there is a growing development in the landscape of guidelines and frameworks for the voluntary reports, with the most popular and widely referenced being the Global Reporting Initiative or GRI (KPMG, 2024, 33). Consistent with this evolution, the European Union (EU) has adopted a legislation that aims to govern the disclosure of a company's sustainability aspects. Published in 2022, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) requires that, from 2025 and following a phased-in application, all large and listed companies include sustainability information in their annual reports in accordance with the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) (European Parliament and Council, 2022). More than ever, companies are facing higher social expectations and demands in how they approach their sustainability reporting.

Notwithstanding, considering the documented evidence that gender inequality in the workplace is persistent and pervasive, with fewer women than men participating in the labor market (ILO, 2025), and once in employment, facing additional hurdles to access decision-making jobs (ibid), the drive for accountability and transparency for issues as equal opportunities for women has never been stronger (Grosser & Moon, 2008). In this scenario, CSR practices are increasingly important to enhance company action and

¹ We use the terms “Sustainability Reporting” or “Corporate Social Responsibility” interchangeably to reflect non-financial publications that disclose corporate positions and activities on economic, environmental and social factors. While there is no consensus, the literature suggests that “sustainability report” is a more recent name to “corporate social responsibility report” (Székely & vom Brocke, 2017).

reporting on gender issues (ibid), working as a tool to advance a more equal and fairer workplace for men and women.

Given this context, the present dissertation seeks to establish a comparative analysis between two different sustainability reporting frameworks in terms of their gender equality disclosure requirements, we consider that the effective monitoring of equal opportunities is an important practice to promote gender equality in the workplace and there is a need to critically assess the current and most referred guidelines and sustainability reporting frameworks.

The core research question that guides this work is: *To what extent do the GRI and ESRS reporting frameworks address gender equality, and how do their requirements support the promotion of a more equitable workplace?*

To answer this question, this study adopts a qualitative and inductive approach, employing Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA) as the central research method. QDA enables a systematic interpretation of textual data through coding and identification of emerging themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Kuckartz & Radicker, 2023), offering an understanding of how gender equality is operationalized in both frameworks. The unit of analysis includes the specific disclosure requirements of the GRI and ESRS that explicitly address gender equality and equal opportunities. These were identified based on the presence of key terms such as “equal”, “equality”, “gender”, or “women”, and include disclosures on workforce composition, training, leadership representation, and pay equity.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: Chapter 1 outlines the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility, highlighting CSR’s role in promoting gender equality in the workplace. Chapter 2 provides context on sustainability reporting and develops a theoretical framework on why companies report on non-financial disclosures. Chapter 3 presents our empirical field: The GRI and ESRS frameworks. Chapter 4 presents the methodological considerations and the comparative framework of analysis; and, finally, Chapter 5 is dedicated to our findings and discussion.

2. Promoting an equal workplace for men and women: the role of Corporate Social Responsibility

2.1 The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

There has been a growing interest around the role business organizations can play in contributing to social, economic and environmental aspects of the community in which they operate (Torres & Jain, 2018). The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers not only to this impetus for businesses assuming responsibilities for some wider societal good (Matten & Moon, 2008) but also encompasses the idea of a “more humane, more ethical and more transparent way of doing business” (Van Marrewijk, 2003, 95). Moreover, CSR represents the commitment of business to behave ethically and contribute to the economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and the society at large (WBCSD, 1999).

Building on this idea, CSR has frequently been identified as a catalyst for growth and sustainable development (Amodu, 2018; WBCSD, 1999). From the widely cited definition of sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987), the focus on humanity and nature points out the role of business corporations as means and support for sustainability. Today, it is known that sustainable development is not an issue only for governments and international institutions, but also for companies, presenting a considerable normative pressure for companies to show they are committed to social and environmental goals.

Corporate Social Responsibility is strategically reshaping the way business respond to the expectations of a much broader and more diversified group of stakeholders. However, despite the growing body of literature on the theme (Carroll, 1999; Matten & Moon, 2008, 2020; Dahlsrud, 2008) there is no singular definition or understanding of the CSR construct (Carroll, 2018). Since the 1960s, the concept has been shaped by academic contributions, international policies and significant social and political events (Agudelo, 2019), with a proliferation of meanings over the decades.

Different approaches have been established to propose a better understanding of CSR. In its 1999 literature review of academic definitions of CSR, Carroll dates the first formal definition to Bowen (1953), with his landmark book “The Social Responsibilities of the Businessman” marking the modern discussion on the topic (Carroll, 1999, 270). Davis, considered one of the “strongest advocates for CSR in the 1960s” (Carroll, 2018, 45) further contributes to the development of the concept, defining CSR as “the firm’s

consideration of, and response to, issues beyond the narrow economic, technical, and legal requirements of the firm” (Carroll, 2018, 45 apud Davis, 1973). Building on the historical perspective, in 1979, Carroll systematizes the responsibility placed on business, defining CSR as “the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll, 1979, 499). Moreover, Matten & Moon, in addressing the question “What is CSR” conceptualize it as “policies and practices of corporations that reflect business responsibility for some of the wider societal good. Yet, the precise manifestation and direction of the responsibility lie at the discretion of the corporation (Matten & Moon, 2008, 405).

Given multitude definitions of CSR that have been proposed and set forth, there has also been academic efforts placed to establish a more congruent definition of the term. In its major study, Alexander Dahlsrud conducted a content analysis of published CSR definitions set forth between 1980 and 2003, seeking to narrow its meaning by analyzing its more frequent dimensions (Dahlsrud, 2008). The contributions of this work are multiple: the analysis identified the most frequent aspects that constitutes the definition of CSR are stakeholder, social, economic, voluntariness, and environmental (Dahlsrud, 2008). His conclusion suggests that CSR is interpreted through broad lens, reflecting diverse priorities and perspectives rather than a single, fixed definition.

Moving forward from the conceptual debate, the recent decades have been marked with the focus on recognition and expansion of CSR and its implementation (Agudelo, 2019). In this period, the turning point for business responsibility was the creation of the United Nations Global Compact, in 2000. Although the Pact was not directly related to CSR practices, it represents a notable contribution to themes related to social responsibility, as human rights and environmental issues (Agudelo, 2019). Moreover, in the context of new social expectations, the publication of the Green Paper “Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility (2001)” sets CSR as a European strategy, representing the beginning of a “unified vision and understanding of CSR that would be promoted around European businesses” (ibid). Subsequently, with the Paris agreements and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the need for companies to play an active role in global efforts to achieve the SDGs became globally recognized (Alsayegh et al., 2023).

Currently, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) goes beyond philanthropy and environmental concerns; it plays a crucial role in shaping ethical labor practices and promoting inclusive and more equitable workplaces (Torres & Jain, 2018). As businesses

increasingly recognize their responsibility toward social issues, gender equality has emerged as a key area of focus within CSR initiatives (Grosser and Moon, 2005). With these developments, companies are now expected to foster equitable work environments by implementing policies that address pay gaps, career advancement opportunities, and workplace discrimination (ibid).

2.2 Advancing Gender Equality in the Workplace through CSR.

Over the last decades, different international organisms have highlighted the role of the private sector in building an egalitarian and democratic society. In the 2000s, with the creation of the Global Compact, the United Nations engaged with the business community, addressing the importance of organizations to operate more responsibly, contributing to a fairer world (Agudelo, 2019, 9). Moreover, the launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established a global framework that explicitly calls on businesses to contribute to sustainable development through responsible practices and inclusive growth (UN, 2015). Not only, but gender equality in the workplace is also addressed as an CSR issue within the EU CSR agenda, stating that “adapting structural changes and changing the work environment in order to create a more balanced conditions for both genders will benefit the society as well the enterprise itself” (Commission for the European Communities, 2002).

In this aspect, the changing social and historical meaning of business social responsibility has long established the link between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and gender equality. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been identified as an effective opportunity to integrate gender social priorities into the business strategy (Karam & Jamali, 2013), winding up to the acknowledgment of gender equality in CSR practice and research. In fact, Casaca (2014) refers that “by being socially responsible, organizations contribute to the social sustainability of societies and are also responsible for their workforce (...) creating conditions for gender-inclusive workplaces”

Gender issues feature in a multitude of CSR initiatives (Grosser & Moon, 2019; Torres & Jain, 2018; Velasco-Balmaseda et al, 2024), such as the Women’s Empowerment Principles of the UN Global Compact, the ISO 26000 regarding non-discrimination, the GRI standards for sustainability reporting on gender issues and the work in gender equality in the Ethical Trading Initiative (Torres & Jain, 2018).

In turn, the literature has increasingly integrated gender issues into the field of Corporate Social Responsibility research (Grosser et al., 2017; Grosser & Moon, 2019; Kilgour, 2013; Torres & Jain, 2018). From the perspective of equal opportunities, the studies dive into the analysis of women on boards of directors or in management positions (Velasco-Balmaseda et al, 2024) and the representation of women on boards and its impact on CSR practices (Yasser et al.2017), and ESG performance (Guedes & Grubler, 2025). Other emerging studies in the feminist CSR literature explore gender differences in CSR leadership and their impact on sustainability (Marshall, 2007), gender issues in global supply chains (Pearson, 2007), the concept of “gender-washing” in CSR initiatives (Walters, 2022) and raise questions about the representation of women stakeholders and CSR policies (Grosser, 2016). To a lesser extent, some studies also point to the need for CSR to be concerned with women's reproductive work, in addition to workplace issues (Pearson, 2007).

Furthermore, the question of how CSR can become a tool for gender equality and counterbalance gender divisions in organizations has been addressed by Torres and Jain (2018) and Grosser and Moon (2019). Their studies integrate and dialogue with Feminist Organization Studies, encouraging a “more inclusive CSR research” (Grosser & Moon, 2019, p. 323). Indeed, Feminist Theories have long been an important source of key insights to organizational studies, shifting the focus from individual women and men to address the ways organizations are themselves gendered (Acker, 1990, 145). This perspective lays emphasis on how the social structure and dominant representation of gender roles are reflected in business organizations, that incorporates harmful gender stereotypes in their structure, policies and management process (Acker, 1990; Casaca & Lortie, 2017).

Building on this idea, these theories offer a unique perspective on what profit-making organizations are responsible for (Grosser & Moon, 2019), helping to address gender issues in the CSR realm. With that being, Torres and Jain (2018, 4) argues that companies can implement two approaches when it comes to gender issues, basic CSR compliance on local regulation and industrial standards or the implementation of more voluntary initiatives through a proactive strategy, which often goes beyond legal obligations to foster organizational change.

3. Key aspects of sustainability reporting

3.1 Why do companies report on their social and environmental performance?

As Corporate Social Responsibility consolidates the idea that companies should go beyond the simple generation of profit to account for the business impact on people's lives, there is an increased incentive for corporations to report on their sustainability activities (Ehnert et al, 2016; KPMG, 2024). More importantly, CSR practices are frequently related to phenomena such as transparency, stakeholder dialogue and sustainability reporting (Van Marrewijk, 2003), with CSR being associated with the increase in company reporting of their social impacts and responsibilities (Grosser et al, 2008). Not only, Unerman and O'Dwyer (2007) stated that accountability to stakeholders for Corporate Social Responsibility will deliver more enhanced long-term shareholder value.

The current spread of CSR practices and policies are identified as crucial for companies' accountability on their social activity and impact. Not only because is intrinsically related to the business-society relations, but also because the drive for disclosure is carried on through the CSR frameworks requirements. Even more, CSR reporting has been identified as a potential aid to the gender equality agenda (Grosser et al, 2005, 2008), contributing to an increased transparency on gender issues in the workplace. In this regard, Grosser and colleagues reaffirm this idea by concluding that most reporting on gender and diversity issues now take place within sustainability or CSR reports and in CSR sections of company websites (Grosser et al., 2008).

With that being, as a strategic tool, Corporate Social Responsibility or Sustainability reporting has been described in different ways. The Global Reporting Initiative defines sustainability reporting as "the practice of measuring, disclosing, and being accountable to internal and external stakeholders for organizational performance towards the goal of sustainable development" (GRI, 2023). Furthermore, such reporting has also been termed "Corporate Social Responsibility reporting", "ESG reporting", "non-financial reporting" and "social and environmental reporting" (Luque-Vilchez et al, 2023, p. 639). This conceptual diversity reflects the evolving nature of Corporate Social Responsibility and the growing emphasis on transparency in business practices. In this sense, as companies face increasing pressure from investors, regulators, consumers and civil society to demonstrate sustainable practices, sustainability reporting has become an essential mechanism for accountability, decision-making, and long-term value creation (Adams, 2002; Dienes et al, 2016; Grosser et al, 2008).

Beyond terminology, the rationale behind sustainability reporting can be understood through various theoretical lenses. Some companies engage in reporting as a means of enhancing corporate legitimacy, ensuring that their actions align with societal norms and expectations (Deegan, 2002). Others use it as a tool for managing stakeholder relationships, aiming to demonstrate accountability and transparency to investors, customers, employees, and regulatory bodies (Fernandez-Feijoo et al, 2014; Prado-Lorenzo et al, 2009). Additionally, institutional pressures, such as government regulations, industry standards, and competitive dynamics, can drive companies to disclose their environmental and social impacts (Dawkins & Fraas, 2008). While there is no unifying theory (Kent & Zunker, 2015) research has been backed by institutional, legitimacy and stakeholder theory to explain voluntary disclosures.

According to Donna J. Wood (1991, 68), companies meet their “social responsibility through Corporate Social Performance”, which is defined as the “outcome of corporate behavior” (p. 66), even more, companies *improve* their social performance when producing “fewer harms and more beneficial outcomes for societies and their people”. Essentially, this outcome relates to the company’s societal relationships and, according to the author, its disclosures are taken as a way for companies to communicate their actions and the results of these actions (ibid). Therefore, the relation between CSR and company disclosure is widely discussed through the stakeholder management lens, specifically through Stakeholder Theory (Prado-Lorenzo et al., 2009).

Sustainability reporting is understood as a strategic plan by corporations to show a firm’s social performance to the stakeholders (Roberts, 1992). Building on the stakeholder approach to strategic management by Freeman (1983), Ullmann (1985) first developed a conceptual framework to understand levels of corporate social responsibility activity and disclosure based on the stakeholder concept (Roberts, 1992, p. 595). Ullmann’s conclusion is that CSR public disclosures provide the basis for the dialogue with various business constituencies (Robert, 1992, p. 599 cited Ullmann, 1985). Later, it was then Roberts (1992) who used stakeholder theory to explain social responsibility disclosure, stating it “offers a theoretical foundation in which to analyze the impact of prior economic performance, strategic posture toward social responsibility activities, and the intensity of stakeholder power on levels of corporate social disclosure” (p. 610).

In this sense, Stakeholder Theory states that disclosure policies are a way of providing information to various types of stakeholders, including employees, investors and consumers. In fact, developing relationships to multiple stakeholders has been the

underlying idea for the creation of reporting frameworks and global standards (Ehnert, 2016). Considering the importance of reporting for stakeholder relations, Owen (2003, 2) states that “The whole *raison d’être* for social and environmental accounting lies in its potential to make certain aspects of corporate activity more transparent to external stakeholders, who may then feel empowered to hold corporate management accountable for their actions insofar as they are affected by them”.

The power of stakeholders is also an essential determinant in legitimacy theory (Garcia et al, 2020). Legitimacy is then based on the notion of “social contract” (Deegan, 2002, 293), in which the organization will gain support from the stakeholders as far as its activities give benefits to the society. From this perspective, companies disclose their environmental and social performances as a mechanism to increase people’s level of confidence in them, enhance their reputation and ensure that their action is seen as legitimate (*ibid*). However, the degree of legitimacy is subject to the type of information different interest groups demand from companies (Garcia et al, 2020).

The notion of legitimacy is also central to Institutional Theory (Deegan, 2002, p. 295). In this theoretical framework, the determinants for disclosure are associated with the macro system and institutional pressures (Prado-Lorenzo et al, 2009). Institutional theorists highlight the importance of aligning with institutional expectations and following established rules and norms (Dawkins and Fraas, 2013), with organizations changing their structure or operations to conform with external pressures (Deegan, 2002). These institutional entities include, but are not limited to, the government, regulatory agencies, NGOs, interest groups, and the general public. Therefore, from this perspective, disclosure on social performance is both a reaction to institutional and external pressures, as well as carried out to achieve compliance with institutional processes (Garcia et al, 2020).

3.2 Corporate disclosure on Gender (In)equality

In the landscape of social reporting research, very few studies have focused on the issue of gender (Hossain et al, 2016). Notwithstanding, the drive for transparency and accountability for issues as equal opportunities for women has never been stronger (Grosser et al, 2008). As part of the earlier research on corporate accountability for equal opportunities, the broad work of Adams highlighted the influence of corporate disclosure in setting publicly the “tone” about some workplace issues. For Adams and Harte (2000), CSR reporting has the potential to help reduce the impact of discrimination, potentially

shaping what is important to society (Adams & Harte, 2000). Moreover, it is considered one of the many institutions that “legitimize corporate existence and, as a “tool” of more powerful groups in society, reinforces the status quo” (Adams & Harte, 2000, 60).

For this matter, we take into account the considerations put forward by Adams and Harte (2004), on what form of disclosures would make discrimination visible and how it might be introduced to CSR reporting. Firstly, the policy statement regarding gender equality should comprehensively address the various employment aspects, highlighting how equal opportunities align with corporate governance structures and the degree of involvement of the key stakeholders in developing and monitoring such policies and performance (2000). In terms of the achievement of the corporate policy in gender equality, and of its monitoring practices, companies should disclose how each commitment is fulfilled across the employment contracts, while also disclosing the type of informational system which is put into place to track the application of equal opportunities policies (ibid). Finally, reporting should also include critical matters such as formal investigations by statutory authorities and legal cases and the active participation of workers and trade unions in policy development, information collection and decision-making transparently reported.

Following with the research development on gender and workplace issues reporting, some authors have further structured the earlier propositions to different specific categories. In their pioneering study of gender representations on financial annual reports, Benschop and Meihuizen (2002) analyzed the texts, statistics and images of annual reports of 30 companies to identify stereotypical gender representations and traditional gendered division of labor in the disclosure practices. In this study, the authors main conclusion was that, through their reports, the companies were highlighting traditional roles of women in the workplace.

Another important contribution on this subject is a study on gender disclosure carried out by Grosser and Moon (2005). In this article, the authors introduced the relationship between Gender Mainstreaming (GM) and CSR systems, namely the human capital management (HCM) reporting, Sustainability reporting guidelines, and Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) criteria on employee and diversity issues. In this perspective, the authors argue that the mutual reinforcement of CSR and GM can advance equality and social inclusion, requiring a leadership commitment, a case for gender equality linked to the business objectives, and gender-specific data and action in areas such as recruitment, retention, turnover; pay work-life balance (Grosser & Moon, 2005).

Further in this work, the authors examined different reporting frameworks and guidelines on gender issues. Commenting on the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the authors mention that overall gender workplace issues could “not be described as mainstreamed in these guidelines” (Grosser & Moon, 2005, 332). The main conclusions here were that these requirements are mostly limited in scope, with the need for further development of the reporting standards, with the introduction of a gender impact assessment, and a more detailed requirement on gender equality/diversity in the workplace as part of the disclosures (ibid).

In a later study, Grosser and Moon (2008) sought to further their initial investigation by analyzing reporting practices in companies in the UK, focusing on gender equality and equal opportunity issues at the workplace. Carrying out interviews with CSR managers of twenty different companies, the authors found little demand for more detailed reporting in those issues. In this line of research, Miles & Niethammer (2009) emphasized the importance of corporate disclosure on gender issues, highlighting that gender diversity can strengthen financial performance of the company. More recently, Hossain et al (2016), examined the importance of gender reporting from a critical and human rights perspective, arguing that in addition to increased transparency in social, economic and environmental aspects of corporate reporting, gender disclosures are also necessary in sustainability reports.

As we explored, transparency plays a main role in managing stakeholders’ expectations in the organization’s activities. In this context, several structured frameworks and guidelines have flourished to ensure consistency, comparability, and reliability in sustainability reporting. The next chapter will present the key frameworks and standards that have been developed to guide sustainability reporting, highlighting their scope, objectives, and impact on CSR practices.

4. Frameworks and standards for sustainability reporting

A recent KPGM (2024) study showed that reporting on Corporate Social Responsibility has become part of business, with 96% of the 250 largest companies in the world doing so. In this context, it’s important for companies to find a reporting strategy

that allows them to meet the stakeholders' expectations about their CSR practices. Moreover, in terms of accountability for gender issues in the workplace, we see as an important tool for business organizations to take adequate measures to avoid that women face discrimination and inequalities at work. Therefore, we turn our attention to different sustainability reporting frameworks to examine how they address CSR, particularly in terms of gender equality disclosures.

Global Reporting Initiative

Established in 1997, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is an independent, international organization that sets reporting standards to help businesses and other organizations be transparent and accountable for their impacts (Global Reporting Initiative [GRI], 2021). Its Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB) follows an independent, multi-stakeholder process to create a global common language for impact reporting, enabling informed dialogue and decision-making around organizational impacts (Adams et al, 2002).

The GRI framework is structured around 3 Universal Standards: The GRI 1 sets “accuracy”, “balance”, “clarity”, “comparability”, “completeness”, “timeliness” and verifiability as the main reporting principles (Global Reporting Initiative [GRI], 2021); GRI 2 requires disclosures about the entity, its activities, governance structure, strategy and policies with respect to sustainable development and the approach to stakeholder engagement; GRI 3 sets out the process for determining and managing material topics, which are the themes with the most impact on the economy, environment and people (Global Reporting Initiative [GRI], 2021). Additionally, the framework provides guidelines for companies on how to report on different topics, categorized between environmental, economic or social sustainability (Global Reporting Initiative [GRI], 2021).

In fact, the GRI Standards have become the most comprehensive and widely used framework for sustainability reporting (Global Reporting Initiative, 2021; KPMG, 2024). While this being, there is a large potential to drive change through its mechanisms: Initially focusing on reporting on metrics, the principle-based standards now cover disclosures on management approach, governance oversight and integration of sustainability development into strategy (Adams et al, 2002a). In 2009, the GRI published a report stating that “The case for promoting gender equality and integrating gender into sustainability reports is multi-faceted” and that “Gender and Sustainability Reporting is

an area where every organization can improve” (Miles & Niethammer, 2009). This emphasizes the potential for organizations to drive meaningful change through enhanced gender-focused disclosures within their sustainability reports.

European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS)

As a recent development in the social and sustainability disclosure landscape, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) represents a significant milestone in corporate transparency and accountability. The CSRD was proposed in 2022 by the European Commission as a measure to achieve a “sustainable and inclusive growth, manage financial risks stemming from climate change, resource depletion, environmental degradation and social issues” (European Parliament and Council, 2022). Not only that, but the directive is also an integral part of the efforts put in place to contribute to the EU’s Green Deal and the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Agenda.

The CSRD is a regulatory framework that aims to ensure that corporate sustainability reporting is reliable, comparable and actionable. It substantially increases the number of companies who are obligated to disclose their social and environmental impacts and introduces more detailed reporting requirements, including the obligation to report in accordance with the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), further integration of sustainability information in the management report and digital tagging of the reported information (Hummel & Jobst, 2024). Once fully implemented, it is estimated that CSRD will make reporting on sustainability topics mandatory for around 50,000 companies in the EU (KPMG, 2024). Therefore, the ESRS is gaining increased importance as it provides the framework to fulfill CSRD’s objectives, around 12% of the G250 and 6% of N100 companies in EU countries are already referring to ESRS in their reports (KPMG, 2024).

Developed by the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG), the ESRS was designed to meet the EU policy objectives set out in the CSRD and it was first adopted by the European Commission in July 2023 (Hummel & Jobst, 2024). Like the GRI standards, the ESRS comprises three categories of standards: (i) cross-cutting standards, (ii) topical standards, and (iii) sector-specific standards. The cross-cutting standards are ESRS 1 “General Requirements”, which sets out general requirements for preparing and presenting sustainability-related information, and ESRS 2, which establishes Disclosure Requirements on the information that needs to be provided across all material sustainability matters (EFRAG, n.d). Topical ESRS cover specific

sustainability topics across three broad categories: Environmental (E), Social (S), and Governance (G), and can include specific requirements that complement the general level of Disclosure Requirements (EFRAG, n.d). Finally, sector-specific standards are applicable to all undertakings in a specific sector and address impacts, risks and opportunities (IRO) that are likely to be material in each requirement (ibid).

Within the ESRS framework, requirements related to social aspects and gender equality are primarily outlined in the ESRS S1 to S4 standards, which cover the social dimension of sustainability reporting. For the present analysis, we consider relevant the ESRS S1 (Own Workforce), as it includes detailed disclosure requirements on equal treatment, opportunities for all, diversity (including gender balance), working conditions, and social dialogue. Additionally, cross-cutting standards such as ESRS 2 (General Disclosures) also require undertakings to disclose gender balance as a sustainability matter integrated into governance, strategy, and impact management.

5. Research method

This section aims to present the methodology employed in the development of the study, describing the delimitation of the empirical field, the unit of analysis, the foundation of the research method, and outlining the data collection and analysis procedures chosen.

To explore the extent to which the GRI and ESRS sustainability reporting standards address gender equality and how their disclosure requirements support the promotion of a more equitable workplace, this study adopts a qualitative and inductive approach, employing Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA). This research method, which involves the interpretation of text data through a systematic process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023), has been referred in similar studies to analyze sustainability reports, corporate certifications, and standards (Velasco-Balmaseda et al., 2024). By closely reviewing the language, structure and thematic patterns, the method will allow a nuanced and critical understanding of how each standard operationalizes gender equality in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility.

Unit of Analysis and Data Collection

To carry out the comparative analysis, we firstly selected the disclosure requirements on both GRI and ESRS standards that pertain to gender equality and equal opportunities. The unit of analysis includes the textual content of these disclosures, focusing on identifying recurring themes, patterns and constructs related to gender equality. These disclosures were identified as containing the terms “equal”, “equality”, “gender”, or “women”, requiring organizations report on workforce composition, training opportunities, gender representation in leadership, and pay equity, providing critical insights into workplace gender dynamics.

The GRI disclosures with requirements that specifically address gender-related issues are:

<i>GRI 2.7</i>	<i>Information on employees and other workers</i>
<i>GRI 401.3</i>	<i>Parental Leave</i>
<i>GRI 404.1</i>	<i>Average hours of training per year per employee</i>
<i>GRI 405.1</i>	<i>Diversity of governance bodies and employees</i>
<i>GRI 405.2</i>	<i>Ratio of basic salary and remuneration of women to men</i>

The ESRS includes 17 indicators within their topical standard “Own Workforce”, which objectives are to specify disclosure requirements the undertaking’s material impacts, risks and opportunities on its own workforce (EFRAG, 2023). Within this scope, five disclosure requirements are related to gender equality:

S1	1: Policies related to own workforce
S1	6: Characteristics of the undertaking’s employees
S1	9: Diversity metrics
S1	13: Training and skills development metrics
S1	15: Work life balance metrics
S1	16: Remuneration Metrics (Pay gap and total remuneration).

The complete text and description of each disclosure is included in the Appendix I.

Data Analysis and emerging categories

The data analysis will review the disclosures to identify the underlying categories related to the promotion of gender equality in the workplace. Employing an inductive approach, a process where categories emerge directly from empirical data (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023) the coding process focus on identifying recurring themes and concepts related to the promotion of gender equality. The goal of this method is to condense varied raw data onto a theme for easy identification of categorical segments in texts and to link these categories to the research objectives (Thomas, 2006). We consider this method insightful, as the goal of these inductive categories are to form a structured and comparable way to understand and analyze the textual data from the requirements.

After identifying the disclosure requirements that contain meaningful units of analysis, we create a label for a category to which the text segment is assigned (Thomas, 2006). The emergent categories are the main thematic gender-sensitive sections found in the unit of analysis, based on the relevance to gender equality in the workplace (Casaca & Pinheiro, 2021; CITE, 2008). The analytical categories are:

Workforce composition	Capturing how gender distribution is reported across organizational levels;
Equal pay and remuneration	Addressing remuneration ratios and pay gap metrics between men and women;
Training and Capacity Building	Related to equal access to learning and career advancement opportunities;
Work-life Balance and Support Structures	Including policies on parental leave, caregiving, and flexible work arrangements
Governance-level diversity	Reflecting gender representation in senior leadership and decision-making roles.

6. Findings and discussion

The aim of the present study is to examine the extent to which the GRI and ESRS reporting requirements address gender equality and how it contributes to promoting more equitable workplaces. By analyzing the guidelines and disclosure requirements set forth by both frameworks, this section explores the alignment of each framework with key dimensions of gender equality to employment and workplace issues. We consider that addressing persistent workplace inequities requires not only comprehensive organizational policies but also robust frameworks for reporting and accountability that align with broader CSR commitments and global sustainable development goals

The European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy defines gender equality as a vision where men and women are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, can participate in and lead all aspects of society (European Commission, 2020). In the workplace, fostering gender equality involves an egalitarian representation of men and women in different occupational categories, ensuring non-discriminatory processes of recruitment, achieving equal pay for work of equal value, equal access to professional training and career progress and ensuring full enjoyment of maternity and paternity leave by both parents (ILO, 2020, 2023).

Despite significant progress in recent decades, gender inequality remains pervasive in the workplace, while women's employment rate in the EU is in its highest point (European Commission, 2020), many women still face discrimination and experience barriers when entering the labor market and, once in employment they earn 15.7% less than men in average (ibid) and are under-represented in decision-making roles (ibid). This scenario results in a disconcerting reality: women with different working conditions, a gender pay gap, and an overrepresentation of women in precarious and part-time jobs, among other challenges (ILO, 2022). Additionally, unconscious biases and cultural norms can perpetuate disparities in recognition, promotions, and decision-making power, reinforcing structural inequities. Gender-based harassment and unequal distribution of caregiving responsibilities further exacerbate these challenges, contributing to higher turnover rates and limited career advancement for affected employees (ILO, 2020).

In the landscape of corporate sustainability reporting, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) represents a widely recognized set of standards, with reliable frameworks for companies worldwide. Indeed, the introduction of the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), mandated by the Corporate Sustainability Reporting

Directive (CSRD) represents a step further in terms of international commitment to reaching sustainable development goals, while it raises awareness to the importance of harmony and coherence between the frameworks. For this reason, we draw the importance of comparing both frameworks and understating their interaction in the way their requirements address workplace equality for men and women. Building on the extract of relevant disclosures, the systematic review extracted the following emergent categories related to gender equality: Workforce composition, Pay Equity, Training and Capacity Building, Work-life Balance and Support Structures and Governance-level diversity²

6.1 Workforce Composition

Addressing workforce composition is crucial for promoting gender equality as it provides a clear picture of how men and women are represented across different roles, levels, and employment types within an organization. Access to this information is particularly important when we consider gender gaps in employment, with the parity on global labor force participation being 65.7% (World Economic Forum, 2024). Furthermore, in 2024 women's representation in the workforce remained below men's across every industry and economy (ibid). Disclosing workforce composition is also important to highlight the presence of women in non-standard forms of employment like part-time or on-call work.

The following disclosures seek to provide information on representation patterns across the workforce through gender-disaggregated data:

The *GRI 2-7: Information on employees and other workers* requires organizations to disclose the total number of employees and other workers by employment type, contract, both disaggregated by gender, offering a detailed picture of workforce structure. (Global Reporting Initiative [GRI], 2021).

Similarly, ESRS *SI-6 Characteristics of the undertaking's employees* requires disclosure of workforce data by gender, including employment categories and contract types, but also includes additional information on employment conditions through all stages. Providing a more complete view, this disclosure also requires company to report on turnover rates with a contextual information necessary to understand the data (EFRAG, 2024).

² The complete text and description of each disclosure is included in the Appendix I.

6.2 Pay Equity

The principle of Pay Equity involves non-discrimination between men and women in its salary policy or equal pay for the same work or work of the same value (CITE, 2008). Despite the widespread support for equal pay, women still earn 13% less than men at the global level (World Bank, 2024), prevailing at all levels of employment. This difference in remuneration can be partly explained by factors such as education and training, care responsibilities, work experience, company size and union density, as other factors such as discrimination and implicit biases (ILO, 2020). As a result, the gender wage gap continues to generate substantial lifetime earning differentials between men and women.

In this case, pay transparency plays an important role to increase awareness about gender-based pay discrimination. According to the European Commission, when information about pay levels is available it is easier to detect gaps and discrimination, and women can verify if they are being underpaid (European Commission, 2020). This position has recently been strengthened with the New EU Directive on Pay Transparency, which seeks to solidify the principle of equal pay for equal work through enhanced transparency and enforcement (European Council, 2023). The new rules require companies with more than 250 employees to report annually on their gender pay gap, setting targets and corrective measures for companies to comply (European Council, 2023). For this reason, reporting on wage disparities strengthens accountability and helps companies demonstrate their commitment to gender pay equity, promoting fairer workplaces.

In the GRI framework, *GRI 405-2: Ratio of basic salary and remuneration of women to men* requires companies to disclose the salary ratios between genders across employee categories (Global Reporting Initiative [GRI], 2021). This focus on numerical parity focuses rather on pay equality, i.e the same pay for the same work, than on pay equity, i.e the same pay for different work which has similar skill level (CITE, 2008). While the GRI emphasizes principles of diversity and equal opportunity in areas such as recruitment, advancement, and remuneration policies (Global Reporting Initiative [GRI], 2021), its framing does not account for deeper structural issues related to gender-specific dynamics and power imbalance.

The ESRS goes further with *S1-16 Remuneration Metrics (Pay gap and total remuneration)*, which includes both ordinary basic salary and variable components, offering a more comprehensive view of gender pay gaps. The requirement aims to understand the extent of any pay gap between men and women and the level of remuneration inequality, calling for forward-looking actions and narrative explanation of the measures taken (EFRAG, 2024). This framing is aligned with a substantive approach to gender equality by targeting pay equity, linking the pay gap disclosures with policy commitments.

ESRS also requires disclosure of workforce policies (S1-1) that support pay equity, aligning with the European Commission's emphasis on pay transparency as a tool to detect and address pay discrimination (EFRAG, 2024). In line with Adams & Harte (2004), the inclusion of pay equity in organizational policies reinforces a shift from reactive discourse to proactive strategy, encouraging companies to articulate and implement equity goals.

6.3 Training and Capacity Building

According to the International Labor Organization, ensuring equal opportunities to training and retraining leads to greater equality in promotion and career advancement (ILO, 2023). Training and education play a key role in career progression and by embedding gender equality strategies in their learning initiatives, business can help women navigate in professional challenges and take on new opportunities. According to CITE (2008), in this dimension, the promotion of gender equality reflects if principles of non-discrimination and equality are considered in the learning processes, if access to women are guaranteed for a minimum number of certified training hours and the participation rate of women in training courses intended for profession in which they are under-represented.

GRI 404-1: Average hours of training per year per employee requires organizations to report the average training hours the employees have undertaken during the reporting period, broken down by gender (Global Reporting Initiative [GRI], 2021).

In comparison, ESRS *S1-13 Training and skills development metrics* includes not only quantitative data such as training participation, but also qualitative aspects related to the types of training and skills development initiatives. The disclosure requires companies to report on the average training hours per employee by gender, as also the percentage of employees that participate in career development reviews, broken down by gender (EFRAG, 2024). Allowing for a broader understanding of how organizations support capacity building across their workforce, and the business commitment to providing learning opportunities that support women's career development.

6.4 Work-life Balance and Support Structures

Improving work-life balance is deeply intertwined with achieving gender equality at the workplace. In this regard, the conciliation between professional, family and personal life may be achieved through policies promoted by the company, directed aimed at male and female workers or at their families (CITE, 2008), based on a gender-equal perspective. These policies include providing maternity and paternity (parental) protection, preventing discrimination against pregnant women, women and men during parental leave, and workers with family responsibilities, providing paid parental leave, facilitating a smooth return to work after leave, providing flexible work arrangements and supporting other care responsibilities (ILO, 2019)

Not only, maternity and paternity protection and the right to family assistance are an essential condition for the promotion of a balanced relationship between professional and family life (ILO, 2019). This involves ensuring that their absence on maternity or paternity leave has no adverse effects on their resumption and continuation of work following the leave (ILO, 2023).

GRI 401-3: Parental Leave requires disclosure on parental leave policies and uptake, requiring reporting organizations to disclose information on number of employees that were entitled to parental leave and that took parental leave, by gender, as also return to work and retention rates, by gender (Global Reporting Initiative [GRI], 2021).

ESRS addresses this theme more broadly through *S1-15 Work-life balance metrics*, which requires companies to report the extent to which employees are entitled and make use of “family-related leave” (EFRAG, 2024). This disclosure seeks to provide an understanding of family-leave practices and its gender dimension. This broader scope provides a more comprehensive view of how organizations support their workforce beyond parental leave.

6.5 Governance-level Gender diversity

Gender balance equality in corporate boards and executive positions has been associated to a positive impact on profitability, fairness and democracy concerns (Guedes & Grubler, 2025) and still, top-level positions are narrowly accessible for women. Globally speaking, women are still under-represented in high decision-making positions, representing only 27.1% of managers (ILO, 2023). This reality limits the opportunities for women to access economic prosperity and build wealth through their work life. In fact, women make up for 46% of the global workforce entry-level roles, while barely 25% represents C-suite roles (World Economic Forum, 2024), illustrating a glass-ceiling³ limitation throughout a woman's career.

This underrepresentation of women in top management positions is seen as both the result of gender stereotypes and structural elements that dictates systematic disparities between men and women (Casaca & Lortie, 2017). Once they face the additional hurdles, women that achieve high-profile positions constitute a small minority group, often referred as tokens (Kanter, 1977), that are usually isolated, facing the pressure of acting and deciding accordingly as the dominant group (Casaca & Lortie, 2017). Under these circumstances, more women occupying managerial positions works as a visibility force and can work towards boosting confidence and career aspirations to other women in the workforce (ibid).

Seeking to provide transparency on representation levels *GRI 405-1: Diversity of governance bodies and employees* requires organizations to report gender composition data for governance bodies and employees (Global Reporting Initiative [GRI], 2021).

Similarly, *ESRS SI-9 Diversity metrics* also requires reporting on gender diversity but includes additional disclosure of related policies, targets, and progress measures (EFRAG, 2024). This shifts the focus on disclosing descriptive data to include organizational commitments and efforts towards improving governance diversity.

³ The glass ceiling metaphor is used to describe the subtle barriers and invisible discriminatory mechanisms that prevent women from advancing in their careers (Casaca & Lortie, 2017)

In this scenario, a broader organizational attitude towards workforce parity can exert an influence on how women will progress across the career ladder. Here, transparency and accountability play a pivotal role, reinforcing the need for organizations to actively track, report, and address gender disparities to ensure fair promotion practices and inclusive leadership pipelines (Hossain et al, 2016). However, Casaca and Lortie asserts (2017, 26) that “gender balance and gender equality are not synonymous”, and despite highlighting an organizational structure, data on gender diversity are not enough to challenge the dominant norms, values, practices and gendered relations of power and privilege.

“Strategies for gender equality are characterized in a process of continuous innovation” (Benshop and Verloo, 2011). In the context of promoting gender equality within organizations, Casaca and Lortie (2017) introduce change management as the process of managing planned organizational change, encompassing all activities required for implementation. They emphasize applying gender lens to the methodological approach of organisational change, to comprehensively address the intertwined barriers to gender equality (ibid). Our focus here lies on the diagnosis phase, where disclosure requirements in both the GRI and ESRS frameworks serve as important tools to help companies assess their gender equality progress and identify challenges and opportunities.

The relevance of this diagnostic exercise is underlined by Casaca (2021, 77), who argues that “The more thorough the diagnosis and the more informative the corresponding report, the greater the likelihood that the company/organization will have the necessary information to review its policies, practices, management processes, and work organization”. This aligns with Grosser and Moon (2005) who contend that the impact of CSR practices to gender equality is much linked to the extent gender issues have been mainstreamed in reporting. From a technical standpoint, the approach of gender mainstreaming in sustainability reporting involves having gender disaggregated statistics, gender impact assessment, gender proofing, gender equality training, and the development of gender equality indicators (ibid).

Sustainability reporting, as the mechanisms that companies use to report on their environmental, social and governance performance has the space for companies to communicate their commitments to gender equality. More than addressing the stakeholders data demands, a strategic report discloses the gender context in which the

company operates, its management approach and organizational policies and performance related to gender equality. A comparison between the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) frameworks reveals that both commit to gender-disaggregated data in some disclosure requirements, which is essential for uncovering structural inequalities. However, reporting often remains limited to a compliance logic, focusing on fulfilling requirements rather than addressing the structural foundations of inequality. This suggests that an effective strategic approach to reporting involves putting in place the necessary mechanisms or incentives to translate disclosures into meaningful action. Indeed, Casaca (2021) contends that this strategic approach is anchored in coherent policies and strategies, which are articulated with the organization mission and values, in line with its global strategy.

Given that an organization's commitment to equality between men and women is mostly stated in its sustainability reports (Casaca and Paço, 2021), closing the gap between disclosures and substantive change requires an alignment with a gender equality strategy. Such strategy enables organisations to move beyond an ad-hoc approach to gender equality and ensures investment in gender initiatives is targeted. In this regard, Casaca (2021) highlights the development of an integrated Equality Plan as a core instrument to promote workplace gender equality. According to the authors, an Equality Plan allows for gender mainstreaming the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, practices and organizational processes (Casaca, 2021).

By anchoring organizational action in structured, systematic data and diagnostics, integrating an Equality Plan into sustainability reportings can link action in evidence and measurable outcomes, also minimizing the risk of gender washing. Walters (2022) defines gender washing as communications intended to mislead stakeholders into overly positive beliefs about an organization's impact on girls and women. Given the voluntary nature of GRI reporting, companies may portray this positive image by selectively disclosing information that highlights progress while omitting contradictory data (Walters, 2022). However, it is also important to acknowledge that institutional pressures and reputational concerns can incentivize companies to improve gender equality practices over time. Within this context, through the sustainability reporting frameworks requirements, companies have at their disposal tools that can work for equality promotion when integrated in a gender strategy and Equality Plan and, at the same time, society and all stakeholders can have appropriate information to exert pressure and influence regarding change in workplace gender equality.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to examine the extent to which the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) frameworks address gender equality through their disclosure requirements. The rising societal expectations for corporate transparency and accountability, coupled with legislative advances at the European Union level, have made sustainability disclosures not only a voluntary act of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) but increasingly a mandatory mechanism for a company to demonstrate its commitment to the impact its operation has on the community. This study emerges from a context where business have a key role in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (United Nations, 2015), while considering that socially responsible companies take ownership to create social sustainability and a more gender-inclusive workplace (Casaca, 2014).

Drawing on Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA), the study revealed a nuanced but critical distinction in how these frameworks operationalize gender-related disclosures. The analysis was structured across five thematic categories: Workforce Composition, Pay Equity, Training and Capacity Building, Work-life balance and Support Structures, and Governance-level Diversity, which served as analytical lenses to assess the gender sensitivity of the frameworks. In each of these areas, the GRI provides a descriptive benchmark, while ESRS deepens accountability.

In the pursuit of genuine workplace equality between men and women, transparency must be paired with strategy. While the GRI and ESRS provide valuable diagnostic instruments to be integrated in a wider gender equality company policy, this study is limited by its focus on the frameworks themselves rather than on empirical evidence of their implementation and impact in organizations. Future research should explore how companies translate disclosures into concrete actions and examine the effectiveness of Gender Equality commitments in driving substantive outcomes. Only by combining rigorous data collection with deliberate policy action can companies move beyond reporting as an end in itself toward a future in which gender equality is not merely disclosed but truly reflected into all practices of a company's culture.

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APENDIX 1

GRI DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

Universal Standards - Apply to all three Universal Standards to the Reporting.

Disclosure 2-7 Employees

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

- a. Total number of employees by employment contract (permanent and temporary), by gender.
- c. Total number of employees by employment type (full-time and part-time), by gender.
- d. Whether a significant portion of the organization's activities are performed by workers who are not employees. If applicable, a description of the nature and scale of work performed by workers who are not employees.
- e. Any significant variations in the numbers reported in Disclosures 102-8-a, 102-8-b, and 102-8-c (such as seasonal variations in the tourism or agricultural industries).
- f. An explanation of how the data have been compiled, including any assumptions made.

Topical Standards - GRI 400 Social Topics

Disclosure 401- 3 Parental Leave

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

- a. Total number of employees that were entitled to parental leave, by gender.
- b. Total number of employees that took parental leave, by gender.

- c. Total number of employees that returned to work in the reporting period after parental leave ended, by gender.
- d. Total number of employees that returned to work after parental leave ended that were still employed 12 months after their return to work, by gender.
- e. Return to work and retention rates of employees that took parental leave, by gender.

Disclosure 404-1 Average hours of training per year per employee

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

- a. Average hours of training that the organization's employees have undertaken during the reporting period, by:
 - i. gender;
 - ii. employee category.

Disclosure 405-1 - Diversity of governance bodies and employees

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

- a. Percentage of individuals within the organization's governance bodies in each of the following diversity categories:
 - i. Gender;
 - ii. Age group: under 30 years old, 30-50 years old, over 50 years old;
 - iii. Other indicators of diversity where relevant (such as minority or vulnerable groups).
- b. Percentage of employees per employee category in each of the following diversity categories:
 - i. Gender;
 - ii. Age group: under 30 years old, 30-50 years old, over 50 years old;
 - iii. Other indicators of diversity where relevant (such as minority or vulnerable groups)

Disclosure 405-2 - Ratio of basic salary and remuneration of women to men

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

- a. Ratio of the basic salary and remuneration of women to men for each employee category, by significant locations of operation.

b. The definition used for ‘significant locations of operation’.

Background

An organization can take an active role in reviewing its operations and decisions, in order to promote diversity, eliminate gender bias, and support equal opportunity. These principles apply equally to recruitment, opportunities for advancement, and remuneration policies. Equality of remuneration is also an important factor in retaining qualified employees.

Disclosure 401-3 Parental Leave

The reporting organization shall report the following information:

- a. Total number of employees that were entitled to parental leave, by gender.
- b. Total number of employees that took parental leave, by gender.
- c. Total number of employees that returned to work in the reporting period after parental leave ended, by gender.
- d. Total number of employees that returned to work after parental leave ended that were still employed 12 months after their return to work, by gender.
- e. Return to work and retention rates of employees that took parental leave, by gender.

ESRS DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

ESRS S1 - OWN WORKFORCE

ESRS S1 includes reporting requirements on the wellbeing and working conditions for employees. The objective of of ESRS 1 is to provide users with an understanding of a company’s sustainability-related impacts on it’s own workforce, as well as related sustainability-related risks and opportunities, including: How the company affects its own workforce, in terms of positive and negative, actual or sustainability-related impacts; Own workforce includes employees and non-employees (Self-employed worker or Temporary agency worker).

Disclosure Requirement S1-6 Characteristics of the company's employees

The undertaking shall disclose:

- a. the total number of employees by headcount, and breakdowns by gender and by country for countries in which the undertaking has 50 or more employees representing at least 10% of its total number of employees;
- b. the total number by head count or full time equivalent (FTE) of: i. permanent employees, and breakdown by gender; ii. temporary employees, and breakdown by gender; and iii. non-guaranteed hours employees, and breakdown by gender.
- c. the total number of employees who have left the undertaking during the reporting period and the rate of employee turnover in the reporting period.
- d. a description of the methodologies and assumptions used to compile the data, including whether the numbers are reported: i. in head count or full-time equivalent (FTE) (including an explanation of how FTE is defined); and ii. at the end of the reporting period, as an average across the reporting period, or using another methodology.
- e. where applicable, a provision of contextual information necessary to understand the data (for example, to understand fluctuations in number of employees during the reporting period); and
- f. a cross-reference of the information reported under (a) above to the most representative number in the financial statements.

Disclosure Requirement S1-9 Diversity Metrics

The undertaking shall disclose:

The gender distribution at top management and the age distribution amongst its employees.

The objective of this Disclosure Requirement is to enable an understanding of gender diversity at top management level and the age distribution of its employees.

The undertaking shall disclose: (a) the gender distribution in number and percentage at top management level; and (b) the distribution of employees by age group: under 30 years old; 30-50 years old; over 50 years old.

Disclosure Requirement S1-13 Training and skills development metrics

The undertaking shall disclose the extent to which training and skills development is provided to its employees.

The objective of this Disclosure Requirement is to enable an understanding of the training and skills development -related activities that have been offered to employees, within the context of continuous professional growth, to upgrade employees' skills and facilitate continued employability.

The disclosure required by paragraph 81 shall include: (a) the percentage of employees that participated in regular performance and career development reviews; such information shall be broken down by gender; (b) the average number of training hours per employee and by gender.

The undertaking may disclose breakdowns by employee category for the percentage of employees that participated in regular performance and career development and for the average number of training hours per employee

The undertaking may also disclose the information specified in this disclosure requirement with regard to non-employees in its workforce.

Disclosure Requirement SI-15 Work-life balance metrics

The undertaking shall disclose the extent to which employees are entitled to and make use of family-related leave.

The objective of this Disclosure Requirement is to provide an understanding of the entitlement and actual practices amongst the employees to take family-related leave in a gender equitable manner, as it is one of the dimensions of work-life balance.

The disclosure required by paragraph 91 shall include: (a) the percentage of employees entitled to take family-related leave; and (b) the percentage of entitled employees that took family-related leave, and a breakdown by gender.

Disclosure Requirement SI-16 Remuneration metrics (pay gap and total remuneration)

The undertaking shall disclose the percentage gap in pay between its female and male employees and the ratio between the remuneration of its highest paid individual and the median remuneration for its employees.

The objective of this Disclosure Requirement is twofold: to allow an understanding of the extent of any gap in the pay between women and men amongst the undertaking's employees; and to provide insight into the level of remuneration inequality inside the undertaking and whether wide pay disparities exist.

The disclosure required by paragraph 95 shall include:

- (a) the gender pay gap, defined as the difference of average pay levels between female and male employees, expressed as a percentage of the average pay level of male employees.
- (b) the annual total remuneration ratio of the highest paid individual to the median annual total remuneration for all employees (excluding the highest-paid individual); and
- (c) where applicable, any contextual information necessary to understand the data and how the data has been compiled and other changes to the underlying data that are to be considered.

The undertaking may disclose a breakdown of the gender pay gap as defined in paragraph 97(a) by employee category and/or by country/segment. The undertaking may also disclose the gender pay gap between employees by categories of employees broken down by ordinary basic salary and complementary or variable components.