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## EDITOR

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## THE CERTIFICATION OF GENDER EQUALITY: A PIONEERING INITIATIVE

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### ABSTRACT

Based on the latest report of the European Institute for Gender Equality, the Gender Equality Index 2022 score for the European Union (EU) was 68.6 points out of 100. Gender equality in the domain of work remains a major issue in almost every EU Member State. Women in the labour market still experience persistent disadvantages in employment and earnings compared to men. The low female employment rate and gender pay gap also greatly affect the Italian economy. To reverse this trend and in support of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality, the Italian Legislature has recently introduced the certification of gender equality to allow organizations to voluntarily disclose their virtuous inclusive policies. Companies are becoming interested in obtaining this certification, not only for reputational aspects and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations, but also to reap some economic benefits, such as reductions in social security contributions and increases in their reward scores in competitions for funding from authorities holding European national and regional resources. The aim of this study is to explain the requirements to be met for achieving the certification of gender equality, in conformity with reference practice UNI/PdR 125:2022, which, owing to its effective and appropriate framework, could become an international standard or a measure emulated by other countries.

The reference practice, which has arisen from a concerted process shared with various stakeholders, provides qualitative and quantitative Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), associated to six areas. It has been devised for all organizations belonging to public and private sectors and operating in both for profit and not-profit contexts. The number of KPIs and the overall summary score to be met for achieving the certification vary according to the size of the organization and industrial sector. Despite its recent introduction, numerous Italian companies have got or are committed to getting the certification of gender equality. This unexpected success provides further motivation for sharing this pioneering initiative worldwide, in the hope that it can be replicated in other countries to promote the culture of gender equality. Finally, the study sheds light on the important role that the innovative certification of gender equality can play on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) disclosure.

**Keywords:** Certification of gender equality, ESG disclosure, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), Sustainable Development Goals.