

# WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

MARCH 2020

## WEPs IN ACTION



PRINCIPLE 1

**Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality**

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## CASE STUDY: ORANGE GROUP TAKING A GLOBAL APPROACH TO GENDER EQUALITY

### LESSONS LEARNED

- Creating a strategic executive committee on gender equality is one way to demonstrate commitment at the very top and can help propel organizational priorities towards gender equality goals.
- Engaging in “social dialogue” with staff throughout the organization is an effective way to create a shared strategic vision.
- Building common gender equality goals are important, but they need to be adaptable to reflect varied cultural and organizational contexts.
- Sharing good practice across business areas and locations helps to build on what is already working.
- Setting objectives that are unrealistic can be demotivating, especially for those in charge of delivering them. Stretching but achievable goals are more likely to drive action.
- Investing in technical training for non-technical women, especially those who display potential but lack the necessary qualifications, provides genuine equality of opportunity.
- Signing the WEPs makes a company’s commitment to gender equality official, public and prominent.

### CONTEXT

In 2019, French multinational telecommunications firm Orange signed an unprecedented agreement with trade unions, committing to achieve global gender equality. The “*global agreement on workplace gender equality within the Orange Group*” applied to all 148,000 employees worldwide, covering the following broad areas: gender equality; work-life balance; and action to tackle discrimination and address violence against women.

“One of the objectives of the agreement was to encourage discussion and make sure that those who represent our staff support our aim to achieve gender equality and combat discrimination,” according to Sue Berry, International Diversity Project Manager for Orange Group.

Orange's commitment to gender equality is not new. Since 2011, the firm has obtained the Gender Equality European and International Standard certification in 19 countries, and an executive gender equality committee has been in place for some time. The firm publicly cemented its commitment to gender equality when in 2015 Chair and CEO, Stéphane Richard, signed the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs).

## ACTIONS

Signing an agreement with trade unions, or employee forums in countries without unions, was designed to generate a conversation, or "social dialogue". While everybody agreed on the overall goal of achieving gender equality, the negotiations leading up to the agreement helped ensure consensus on what needed to happen to achieve the best outcome for everyone.

A negotiation team with equal number of women and men was established with representatives from human resources (HR), diversity, and corporate social responsibility teams, staff members, and managers from different locations and specialisms. The firm's Compensation and Benefits team was also invited to participate in the equal pay negotiations.

**A great deal of work went into the negotiation process. Data, examples of good practice, and ongoing work were shared and discussed. The goal was to achieve a consensus on what success would look like and how to get there.** It took almost six months to complete the negotiation process and arrive at a final agreement. The agreement constitutes seven chapters:

1. Social dialogue and the network of stakeholders
2. Workplace gender equality
3. Work-life balance
4. Combatting discrimination and violence
5. Raising awareness and communication
6. Supplier and subcontractor involvement
7. Deployment and monitoring the agreement

The global agreement is an additional step towards making Orange's commitment international, "making sure that everyone in Orange, in every country, is on the same page when it comes to gender equality," says Berry.

The first chapter on social dialogue sets out how everybody will work to make the agreement a reality. Each of Orange's subsidiary firms will have a gender equality and diversity committee which will develop local action plans and monitor progress.

"The local committees won't necessarily deliver everything in the agreement. They will adapt it to their context and what makes sense for them, making sure we are all working towards the same overall goal," says Sue Berry.

The rest of the agreement covers a diverse range of topics, from gender equality in technical jobs and equal career opportunities, through to good communication with staff on equality, and the impact Orange can have in the wider industry when it comes to suppliers and subcontractors. But, says Berry, "the agreement was not a charter or an intention to do something. It was much more detailed than that. We agreed on 15 concrete indicators that we will use to measure success."

**While each country has its own targets, there are some universal targets. For example, all countries must make sure women hold 35 per cent of managerial positions by 2025, and by the same deadline must have eliminated the pay gap.**

Progress against targets will be monitored annually, with each of Orange's subsidiary firms providing a progress report and a summary of achievements to the unions.

### The 15 indicators to measure success of the global agreement:

1. The number of women and men on open-ended employment contracts.
2. The number of women and men in manager roles.
3. The number of women and men who are executive committee members.
4. The gender balance in different job areas.
5. The number of externally-recruited women and men employed on open-ended employment contracts.
6. The number of externally-recruited women and men on open-ended employment contracts broken down by job area.
7. The pay gap between women and men.

8. The average annual pay increase awarded to women and men and the average annual pay increase awarded to part-time and full-time employees.
9. The number of women and men who have attended training.
10. The number of training hours for women and men.
11. The number of women and men who benefit from teleworking regularly or occasionally.

12. The number of women and men who benefit from flexible working hours.
13. The number of women and men who work part time.
14. The number of people who have taken maternity or adoption leave during the year.
15. Indicators in respect of harassment and violence are already in place in many of Orange’s subsidiary firms, and may be followed up globally.

## CHALLENGES

Developing an agreement that is relevant everywhere was a challenge. It had to be realistic and ensure that everyone was committed to the same overall goal but take account of the fact that some countries were further ahead than others.

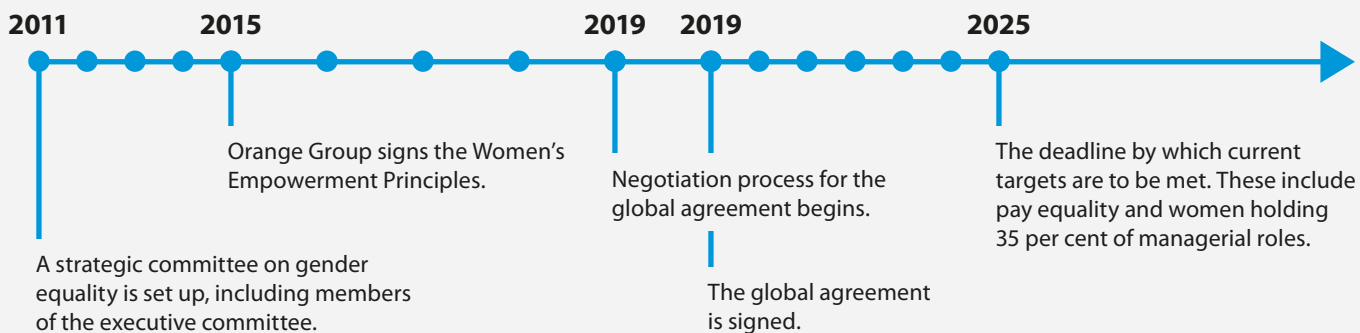
Allowing countries to create their own action plans based around a common vision was the answer.

Recruiting more women into technical roles is a huge, and industry-wide, challenge. The firm is relatively well-balanced in professions like HR and finance, but just 15 per cent of network managers are women and the figure is similarly low in other technical fields. Orange is tackling this challenge on a number of fronts, including offering opportunities for women to retrain in technical fields.

Partnerships with universities and schools aim to encourage girls to consider technical careers and show them what jobs looks like in practice. “It doesn’t necessarily mean developing code all day! The idea is to attract schoolgirls to choose technical subjects and then attract those students to Orange,” says Berry.

The company is also working on tackling bias, particularly in artificial intelligence systems which are often developed by white men and particular prejudices can unconsciously be programmed into the systems. Training programmes to combat unconscious bias, as well as simply making developers aware of the risk, are both part of the solution.

## TIMELINE



## CHALLENGE

Developing a plan that benefits everyone and makes sense in all countries.

Increasing women's representation in technical roles.

The firm was realistic about the goal and ensured everyone agreed with the same overall ambition, while allowing local gender equality and diversity committees to create action plans which centered around the common vision.

Provided technical training to women outside of Orange, with a guarantee of a role at the end of the training. Partnerships with schools and universities also helped create a long-term pipeline of women technicians.

## HOW IT WAS ADDRESSED

## RESULTS

### Title: Women in technology

2012-2020: 300 women trained and hired in technical fields in France.

To help address the disproportionately low number of women in technical roles, Orange has successfully provided retraining opportunities to women working in non-technical fields outside the company. Courses range from six to 12 months, with a guarantee of a job at the end. More than 300 female technicians have been hired this way so far.

Course participants come from a range of backgrounds, including those without the qualifications normally associated with technical roles. "Only hiring people with particular qualifications means that

you're not giving equal opportunities to everybody. We're working on ways to look at people's soft skills instead of just their CVs," Sue Berry explains.

In 2018, Orange went onto launch a similar programme allowing women who are already working in technical fields to enhance their skills in areas where the firm needs more women.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Gaining the buy-in of senior leaders is fundamental to making things happen, according to Sue Berry. "Commitment from the top is an important success factor for gender equality. We can put in place as many measures as we like, but if senior managers aren't convinced it's valuable then we won't get very far."

Sharing what is happening across the company and in different countries is also useful. No area is starting from a blank page; the trick is to build on what already works and make sure that ideas and examples of good practice are shared widely.








Successful negotiations, or social dialogue, hinge on genuinely listening and understanding other people's viewpoints. Getting a diverse group of representatives around the table is also crucial.


While companies should aim high, it is important to set realistic objectives. Orange identified 15 indicators, which was less than the unions had initially wanted but the firm was keen ensure goals were stretching but achievable. "Objectives that are unrealistic can be demotivating. Having something that is doable for all is more motivating for everybody," according to Berry.

## THE ROLE OF WEPs


Signing the Women's Empowerment Principles was an important step for Orange on its gender equality journey. It made the company's commitment more public, official and prominent.


The global perspective offered by the WEPs was one of the key drivers behind the global agreement on workplace gender equality within the Orange Group.

- Principle 1  Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
- Principle 2  Treat all women and men fairly at work– respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.
- Principle 3  Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
- Principle 4  Promote education, training and professional development for women.
- Principle 5  Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
- Principle 6  Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
- Principle 7  Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

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