



# EQUALITY & DIVERSITY REPORT

2023



Mountain biking in South Africa

## Summary

In 2023, we have further structured our work with diversity and inclusion, acting on key initiatives highlighted in our 2022 report and succeeded in integrating this focus within our organisation. Historically, Axess has had a low proportion of women in the workplace. We have therefore given this a special focus in our diversity work so far, not only to improve the gender balance specifically, but also because we believe this gives us insight into how to work with diversity on a broader scale. In 2023, this focus led to a global gender balance of 21%, a 5 percentage point increase since 2022.

Continuing our remarkable growth in 2023, we welcomed 156 new employees this year. Among our new employees, 28% were women. This is a substantial increase from only 18% the previous year. We know that to improve the gender balance at our company and to meet our goal of 30% women by 2025, we need to succeed at hiring a higher percentage of women while simultaneously retaining the talent that we already have. Seeing that our recruitment in 2023 aligned with this philosophy is a great step in the right direction, especially considering the consistent trend across most of our entities. At the same time, we realise that we still need to improve further to reach our 2025 goal.

During the last half of 2023, we started to monitor the percentage of women in the workforce, employee growth and the number of nationalities across all entities in our quarterly management reviews. This enables us to ensure that our development continues in the defined direction, and work together towards our regional and global targets.

In 2023, we also carried out a workshop with some of our field engineers who are women, a group we have identified as most vulnerable to discrimination and harassment. This workshop provided invaluable insights into their positive and negative experiences in the field, as well as where we can improve to better support them. This type of workshop is something we will continue with to improve dialogue and focus on this topic.

## Main observations in 2023

Axess Group:

- Axess workforce consisted of 34 different nationalities.
- Gender balance significantly improved in all regions in 2023.
- Gender balance was 21% in 2023 compared to 16% in 2022.
- We succeed at attracting many more women candidates than ever before.

Axess Norway:

- Improvement in gender balance across most departments and entities in Norway.
- Gender balance of 16% is still low (by excluding field positions the number is 26%).
- Department management reached a historic low of 5% women.
- We had 23% women in management in 2023 compared to 13% in 2022.

The Equality and Diversity Report 2023 marks our third consecutive annual review, presenting Axess Group's equality and diversity status for the year. In addition to serving as an annual update on our work for equality and against discrimination, the report aligns with the disclosure duty of the Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act and summarises how we satisfy the activity duty of the law.



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# INTRODUCTION



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## Diversity and inclusion at Axess

We are a global company, delivering services and solutions to our clients worldwide. Our diverse workforce comprised of people from many different backgrounds and personalities have been our success factor in building strong and high-performing entities in 20+ countries worldwide over the past 25 years. Through this experience, we have seen the strength, creativity and collaboration that results from diversity.

Governed by our Code of Conduct, we shall work actively towards the inclusion of all people at Axess, never to discriminate against any nationalities, ethnicities, religions, belief, gender, gender-expression, sexual orientation, disabilities, age, or political views. We acknowledge that this requires a continuous improvement of insight, transparency, and leadership.

We strongly believe that our focus on improving the gender balance and the experience we have gained from this work already, empowers us to work better with diversity on a broader scale.

With the establishment of our strategy for diversity and inclusion, which we started on in 2023, we have defined a clear goal, a philosophy, and the motivation behind this work. This will enable all of us to steer in the same direction while simultaneously minimising the largest risks for discrimination. This process also involves all leaders, who must understand the implications of these initiatives, and lead by example through inclusive leadership. Our strategy is still a work in progress and will be finalised in 2024.

“

**All employees at Axess shall be able to bring their whole selves to work every day, always feeling like they are welcome, and experience that their opinions are respected and that their contribution is appreciated.**

*- The goal of diversity and inclusion at Axess Group*

## Definitions

To contribute towards open discussions and wider understanding for all, relevant definitions from the Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act [1], that Axxess fully supports and abides by globally, are included in the report.

According to the Act, discrimination on the basis of gender, pregnancy, leave in connection with childbirth or adoption, care responsibilities, ethnicity, religion, belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age or combinations of these factors is prohibited. Ethnicity includes national origin, descent, skin color and language.

Equality means equal status, equal opportunities, and equal rights. Equality presupposes accessibility and accommodation.

**Discrimination** means direct or indirect differential treatment that is not lawful pursuant to § 9, § 10 or § 11 of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act.

- **Direct differential treatment** means treatment of a person that is worse than the treatment that is, has been or would have been afforded to other persons in a corresponding situation.
- **Indirect differential treatment** means any apparently neutral provision, condition, practice, act or omission that results in persons being put in a worse position than others.

**Harassment** means acts, omissions or statements that have the purpose or effect of being offensive, frightening, hostile, degrading or humiliating.

Harassment on the basis of the factors specified as discrimination above, and sexual harassment, are prohibited according to the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act.

**Sexual harassment** means any form of unwanted sexual attention that has the purpose or effect of being offensive, frightening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or troublesome.

[1] Lovdata. (2017). *Act relating to equality and a prohibition against discrimination (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act)*. <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2017-06-16-51>



# GENDER EQUALITY IN NUMBERS



UK colleagues in the Scotland office

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## Gender balance

The gender balance for Axess Group in 2023 is presented in two parts, a breakdown of the gender balance in our Norwegian entities labelled as Axess Norway, and an overview of the total gender balance in all our global entities labelled as Axess Group.

### Axess Norway

All employees in Norway as of 31.12.23.

Entities	Number of women	Number of men	Gender balance in 2023*	Change from 2022**
Axess AS	34	105	<b>24%</b>	Δ 5%pt
Axess Technologies AS	13	74	<b>15%</b>	Δ 5%pt
Axess Industries AS	0	8	<b>0%</b>	-
Axess Digital AS	2	7	<b>22%</b>	Δ 12%pt
Axess Services AS	0	24	<b>0%</b>	-
AxPeak AS	4	53	<b>7%</b>	Δ 3%pt
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>Δ 3%pt</b>

\* Percentage of women in the workplace

\*\* Statistics from 2022 in Norway was from 01.07.22 (1.5 years ago)

### Axess Group

All employees in Axess Group as of 31.12.23.

Regions	Countries	Number of women	Number of men	Gender balance in 2023*	Change from 2022
Axess Europe	Norway, Bosnia & Herzegovina, UK	63	283	<b>18%</b>	Δ 3%pt
Axess Africa	South Africa, Ghana, Angola	22	33	<b>40%</b>	Δ 18%pt
Axess APME	Australia, Singapore, Taiwan, India, Saudi Arabia, UAE	14	58	<b>19%</b>	Δ 5%pt
Axess Americas	USA, Canada, Mexico, Guyana, Brazil	33	125	<b>21%</b>	Δ 3%pt
<b>Total</b>		<b>132</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>Δ 5%pt</b>

\* Percentage of women in the workplace



We give special recognition to the following entities, showing the way with a gender balance that is already exceeding our 2025 target of 30% women in the workforce:

Entities	Gender balance in 2023*	Change from 2022
Axess Digital, Bosnia & Herzegovina	50%	-
Axess UK	42%	-
Axess South Africa	45%	Δ 15%pt
Axess Mexico	33%	Δ 3%pt
Axess Singapore	42%	Δ 18%pt

\* Percentage of women in the workplace

Note that our global gender balance is affected by the fact that most field employees in Norway are our own employees, while many of our field employees outside of Norway are contractors, and these contractors are not accounted for in this report.

## Gender balance in recruitment

We continued our growth in 2023, where we hired a total of 156 new employees.

### Axess Norway

All recruited in Norway in 2023.

Entities	Number of new women	Number of new men	% women recruited in 2023
Axess AS	9	20	31%
Axess Technologies AS	3	8	27%
Axess Industries AS	0	8	0%
Axess Digital AS	1	0	100%
Axess Services AS	0	8	0%
AxPeak AS	2	10	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>22%</b>

### Axess Group

All recruited in Axess Group in 2023.

Regions	Number of new women	Number of new men	% women recruited in 2023
Axess Europe	15	54	22%
Axess Africa	11	3	79%
Axess APME	6	19	24%
Axess Americas	12	36	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>28%</b>

## Temporary positions

Among our own employees, there were 30 temporary positions in Axess Group in 2023, 8 held by women and 22 held by men. 10 of our temporary employees work in Norway (1 woman and 9 men).

## Part-time positions

In 2023, 0.3% of our employees in Norway worked part-time, and all the part-time employees were men. In all cases, part-time positions were chosen based on employees' own desires. At Axess Group, 2.3% of our employees had a part-time position. In total, we had 7 women and 8 men working part-time in 2023.

## Axess Norway - Parental leave

In 2023, the average number of weeks of parental leave in Axess AS was 11.4 weeks for men and 14.2 weeks for women. In Axess Technologies, the average was 14.6 weeks for men and 16.2 weeks for women. In total, our Norwegian companies had 7 men and 2 women on parental leave in 2023.

## Axess Norway - Gender balance in different positions

An overview of the number of men and women in all positions in our Norwegian companies is included in the report to disclose that all positions in our company are suited for both men and women, and that we are working towards a better gender balance at all levels. Group and senior management include employees worldwide.

All employees as of 31.12.23.

Positions	Number of women	Number of men	Gender balance in 2023*	Change from 2022
<b>Group Management</b> Global Axess Group Management	1	10	9%	▼ 9%pt
<b>Senior Management</b> Global Axess Group Management	10	25	29%	▲ 15%pt
<b>Department Management</b> Axess Norway	1	21	5%	▼ 3%pt
<b>Project Managers</b> Axess Norway	9	44	17%	▲ 3%pt
<b>Project Engineers / Technical Engineers</b> Axess Norway	14	57	20%	-
<b>Business Development / Sales</b> Axess Norway	4	6	40%	-
<b>Office Functions (HR, IT, RM, WH etc.)</b> Axess Norway	12	12	50%	▲ 15%pt
<b>Field Engineers and Technicians</b> Axess Norway	9	127	7%	▲ 1%pt

\* Percentage of women in the workplace

## Axess Norway - Gender pay gap

All employees in Norway as of 01.07.23, including salary adjustments for 2023.

Positions	Number of women	Number of men	Average age of women	Average age of men	Gender pay gap %*
Management**	15	51	39	44	-9%
Project Managers	8	46	34	40	-17.3%
Engineers	19	51	35	40	-9%
Office Functions	7	10	40	36	+10%
Field Engineers / Technicians	9	112	29	38	-8.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>262</b>			<b>-5%</b>

\* Pay-gap when considering women's part of men's pay

\*\* Management positions grouped (> 5 employees required for each group to maintain anonymity)

When adjusting for the expected pay for women when reaching the average age of men, relative to the observed age gap for each position, no pay gap is found. For each case, the average pay for women will reach the average pay for men before the age gap is closed when considering a conservative salary adjustment of 3% each year.

The pay gap presented in the table is calculated based on the basic salary, but other payments such as bonus, overtime and other benefits have also been evaluated.

### Extras

Our employees that work offshore get offshore compensation according to the local agreement for their company (Axess AS, Axess Technologies AS, Axess Digital AS, Axess Services AS or AxPeak AS). Within each company, everyone has the same agreement.

### Bonus

No bonus was given to Axess' employees in Axess Norway for 2023.

### Overtime

All employees within each company have the same agreement for compensation of overtime, through Axess AS, Axess Technologies AS, Axess Digital AS, Axess Services AS or AxPeak AS respectively.

### Other benefits

Other benefits are described in the Employee Handbook and are equal for all.

The local agreements are revised regularly through negotiations with the employee representatives from each respective company.



## Comments on our gender equality status in 2023

### Proportion of women is increasing in all regions and in most of our entities

In 2023, we made significant strides in improving gender balance, reversing the negative trajectory observed in 2022. The gender balance for Axess Group was 21% in 2023, 5 percentage point increase from the year before. With both 2022 and 2023 witnessing substantial growth, the recruitment of 156 new employees constituted 24% of our workforce. As identified last year, times of such growth is a great opportunity for us to improve the gender balance if we handle it correctly. It is clear from the gender balance of new employees this year (28% women), that this is exactly what we have done.

At Axess Group, our goal is to have 30% women in our workforce by 2025. By maintaining consistency in our recruitment processes and simultaneously retaining our talents, we will meet this goal. The positive developments in 2023 can be partly attributed to the sustained focus since early 2022. We have communicated with management about the significance of this goal, and the associated risks if we do not meet it, and set clear expectations through intensified monitoring of our progress.

### Recruiting more women with experience

In 2023, we succeeded in hiring more women with prior work experience. This was something that we identified the importance of in Norway last year, since most of the women we hired were from university. That has since become a focus for all entities in Axess Group because we identified how this directly affects our gender balance far into the future. Since we recruit for a lot of our management positions internally, there is a significant risk of indirect discrimination if most of the women at Axess are younger with less experience than men.

In 2023, we achieved a gender balance of 28% among our new employees at Axess Group and 22% at Axess Norway. 75% of new women hired at Axess Norway in 2023 were above 27 years old, indicating our success in attracting women with experience, something that is challenging in the market we operate in. On this point, it is important to emphasise that our focus is to attract a high proportion of women in general, both those with extensive work experience and those that newly graduated.

### Consistent trend across all entities

A trend we observed this year that shows the effectiveness of our focus on gender balance was that 71% of our entities that hired new employees in 2023 hired women. Also, all these entities hired significantly more women compared to previous years and 75% of them hired more than 30% women.

By monitoring that we continued to hire a balanced number of men like before and completing in-depth interviews with those entities who hired most women, we have also performed checks to make sure that no men were discriminated in our recruitment processes.

### Women represented in all positions

At Axess Norway, we monitor the number of employees and gender balance in different positions (management, project management, engineers, sales, office functions and field workers). In 2023, we have women in all these positions. Although the number of women in the workforce is still low, this shows that there are opportunities for women in all positions at Axess. At Axess Norway, the percentage of women in department management is particularly low, meaning it will be extra important for us to focus on equal opportunities for these roles going forward. Although there is an improvement across most positions, we note that it is in business development / sales and office functions where we have improved the most in 2023.

**Low proportion of women in field positions**

At Axess Norway, 7% of our field engineers and technicians are women. Between field engineers and technicians, there are very few resources to choose from in the market, particularly women. We have improved the gender balance by 1 percentage point from 2022 to 2023, however this is a minimal improvement. We have discussed in previous reports that it is difficult to set a specific target for a gender balance in this role, but we have started a global initiative to investigate how we can make field positions and field contracts as adapted and attractive to women as they are to men. We believe that we can make a significant difference through this approach, and that our gender balance will continue to improve, but that other positions will have to compensate for the lower proportion of women in field positions to reach our target for 2025.

**No evidence of significant or systematic gender pay gap found**

In 2023, there was a pay gap between the average pay for men and women in most positions, but this difference was not due to an actual gender pay gap, but due to difference in age and experience. As presented, the average age for men in most positions is significantly higher than the average age of women. When estimating women's pay with a conservative increase each year, we saw that all women should earn at least the same as men when this age gap is closed.

When considering the average pay between men and women of similar age group, or the same graduation year, there is no gender pay gap. After this evaluation, we cannot find any evidence for significant or systematic gender pay gap at Axess Norway, but we will continue to work systematically with this and it is also an important topic during the yearly salary adjustments for our employees.

**No discrimination of women in leadership positions found**

At Axess Norway, there were 23% women in management positions in 2023 compared to 13% in 2022. Historically, most managers are recruited internally, which could be a risk of discrimination if there are few women in the company, few women with senior experience and if the positions are not open for external applications. However, we see today that the representation of women in management has increased, indicating that women get opportunities both through our internal and external recruitment processes. At the same time, we notice the low proportion of women in department management and project management, which is a big risk for future internal recruitment processes. We should utilise our opportunities to improve these numbers in the near future.



Norway colleagues in the Molde office



# DIVERSITY IN NUMBERS



Axess Digital team in the Molde office

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[17](#) Age groups

Presenting diversity in numbers is not straightforward, but we have worked throughout the year to find some non-sensitive data that is useful for us to monitor. Our primary focus is to work for inclusion and diversity in the workplace, and it benefits us to report on more diversity parameters than gender balance to hold ourselves accountable to this. As we continue to mature on these subjects, we will identify more ways to present the diversity at Axess.

## Number of nationalities

We have a diverse workforce across our offices, spanning over 20 countries worldwide. In 2023, there were employees of 34 different nationalities working at Axess Group. Although we do collaborate quite intensively across borders, we shall also ensure that all our employees at every office feel welcome and can bring their whole selves to work, independent of their nationality. We monitor the number of nationalities for each entity throughout the year as one parameter of this inclusivity. In 2023, the most nationally diverse workforce was in Norway, comprised of 17 different nationalities.

Regions	Number of employees	Number of nationalities
Axess Europe	361	19
Axess Africa	55	3
Axess APME	72	10
Axess Americas	158	12
<b>Axess Group</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>34</b>



Figure 1: Employees from 34 countries work at Axess Group

## Nationalities in management

Among our 46 employees in the senior and executive management at Axess Group, we had 11 nationalities represented in 2023:

Bosnia & Herzegovina	Singapore	Brazil
England	India	Colombia
Norway	Taiwan	Canada
Scotland	South Africa	USA

## Age groups

As part of our work with inclusion, and particularly when it comes to the retention of our people, it is relevant to study the demographics of our workforce annually. We need this information to equip our managers with the understanding of what drives our employees and how their expectation will change in the near future. What motivates people and their value set is different between generations and a new generation (Generation Z, born 1997 – 2012) has already entered the workforce. In Figure 2, we can study the composition of our age groups at Axess\*, and based on this information, we can see that Gen Z is already an established part of our workforce, making up about 9% in 2023.

**Employee age at Axess Group in 2023**

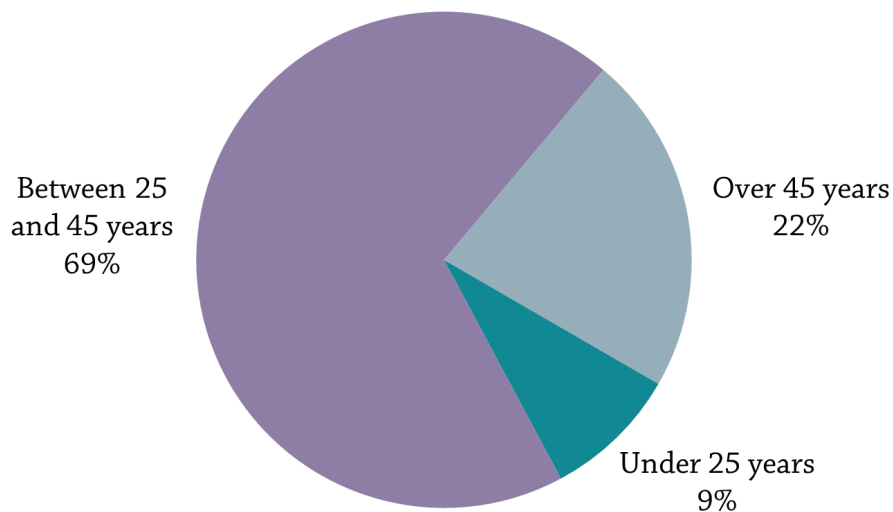


Figure 2: Age groups based on birth year, with data from participants in GPTW survey 2023

\* Data is based on the number of employees contributing to the GPTW survey in 2023. This is believed to be quite representative of the group.





Discussion during Axess Ignite 2023



# RISKS OF DISCRIMINATION



Presentation during Axess Ignite 2023

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At Axess Group, we have a zero tolerance for discrimination. While our Norwegian entities are obliged to evaluate risks of discrimination according to the requirements in the Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, we have established that this is our responsibility in all our entities worldwide. For us, evaluation of risk factors for discrimination is a continuous process, and we can see how this process has improved throughout 2023 thanks to an increased involvement of our employees and more global collaborations. We have discovered the need for new procedures, new types of training and rewriting the requirements in our job vacancies, driven by our awareness of different risks.

Our annual employee satisfaction survey and the current equality status in the company are two indicators we use to evaluate the current risks. With increased gender balance in our workforce, as well as in leadership roles, we see that the risk picture changes. The following is a summary of the identified risks from our internal Action Plan for the anti-discrimination work at Axess Group at the end of 2023.

## **Recruitment**

There is a risk that we discriminate women unconsciously in our recruitment process, particularly through the background and qualifications that we require for our positions.

We have previously identified that for engineering positions, the main engineering programmes we recruit from have a very low percentage of women, while we in some cases could achieve the same result by recruitment from a wider variety of engineering programmes with a higher proportion of women (or even non-engineering programmes). We have since changed the education requirements for many positions, so that they are more general and open to more people. We should continue to focus on this for all our vacancies where this is relevant.

We should also be aware of potential discrimination (on all grounds, not just gender) in the work descriptions, lists of required qualifications as well as how and where we release the job advertisements. There is also a risk that we unconsciously discriminate in how we actively or indirectly approach groups of talents to recruit, how we interview, who we send a job offer to, and what type of positions we are offering to whom.

Another risk of discrimination arises when we have a significant focus on improving the gender balance and improving the overall diversity in our company. The right candidate for a job at Axess should be chosen on basis of their qualifications and skills to do the job. Diversity comes as a natural effect of good and open recruitment processes, as well as an inclusive workplace.

## **Promotion and personal development**

There is a risk of discrimination towards women in internal recruitment of managers due to the gender imbalance in the company. Historically, most managers are recruited internally, which could be a risk of discrimination if there are few women in the company, few women with senior experience and if the positions are not open for external applications. Therefore, we should evaluate external recruitment of management candidates too, when this could benefit the diversity at Axess.

There is also a risk of discrimination (on all grounds, not just gender) through unclear career paths, and if our employees are not given the training to succeed in a new role with new responsibilities.

## **Pay gap and other benefits**

Because the proportion of women in many positions is low, there is a risk of some gender pay gaps that are not visible in our analysis. However, we have not found any risk of a systemic gender pay gap or any sign of discrimination through other benefits.

## **Facilitation**

Our offices, IT systems, communications material etc. could be discriminating if not catered for people with disabilities, such as physical disabilities, hearing loss, and low vision. Identifying these risks is an ongoing process and should be evaluated in our annual safety rounds at our offices.

## **Work-life balance**

No risks related to discrimination of family situations, pregnancy etc. found.

## **Sexual harassment**

Although we ensure that all our employees should be safe at all Axess' offices and Axess' controlled facilities, we are not able to control everything that might occur at other facilities and through encounters with employees from other companies. We know that there is a risk of sexual harassment occurring in the industries we operate in, which we are subjecting our employees to (e.g. when they travel to client's or partner's facilities offshore, shipyards, various industrial plants etc.). We see it as our responsibility to do what we can to prevent this from happening.





South Africa colleagues in the Cape Town office



# WORK FOR EQUALITY AND AGAINST DISCRIMINATION



South Africa team in the Cape Town office

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The pursuit of equality and anti-discrimination is an ongoing effort at Axess Group. The local management in each operational entity has the primary responsibility for overseeing actions and following up on execution, while global management, local management, and sustainability management collaborate to evaluate risks and establish an action plan. Our work on diversity and equal opportunities is part of our material sustainability topics, and our annual sustainability report includes four targets on equality and diversity as part of our ESG performance index. For more information, refer to the Sustainability Report 2023 [2]. The status is also monitored quarterly by all entities and presented at the quarterly management reviews.

In 2023, we started to involve some employees and employee representatives in this work, but in 2024, we aim to collaborate closer with all the representatives from the work environment committee (AMU) and union representatives in Norway, as well as to engage our global sustainability ambassadors more on these topics.

## **Diversity and inclusion strategy**

In 2023, we started developing a strategy for diversity and inclusion which will be finalised in 2024. This is an important step in maturing our thoughts about diversity at Axess and our goals for creating an inclusive workplace for all. The work so far, has provided us with a clear goal and important guidelines on how we should recruit to avoid discrimination in all steps of the recruitment process. We will still give ourselves some time to finalise this strategy, as it is important that it aligns with the overall group strategy and that all managers at Axess get the chance to be involved in the process.

## **Annual employee survey**

We conduct an annual, anonymous, global employee satisfaction survey through Great Place to Work (GPTW). Results from 2023 show that 81% of our employees agree that Axess is a great place to work, which is a good score, although a slight decrease from 2022. The survey shows that the women at Axess are more content than the men in general for the second year in a row.

In addition to assessing the general employee satisfaction, the survey assesses if employees are experiencing any discrimination, and if they find our work environment physically and psychologically safe. We take these topics and results very seriously and have studied the results from 2023 very closely. The need for a separate in-depth survey on diversity and inclusion will be evaluated each year. For 2023, the GPTW survey has already given us a good foundation to work with.

We achieved a very high score on anti-discrimination in 2023, but there are still some employees with negative experiences, which reminds us that the work against discrimination is a continuous process. We also need to address the importance of a psychologically safe work environment, and continue our work with inclusion so that all our employees feel they can bring their whole selves to work every day.

[2] Axess Group. (2023). *Sustainability Report 2023*. <https://www.axessgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Sustainability-Report-2023-final.pdf>

## Employee training

In 2023, we started to work on an initiative to better prepare our field engineers and technicians for their first field trip (onshore or offshore). Training them on topics such as discrimination and sexual harassment is paramount, and a responsibility that weighs heavily on us. We have also just begun working on a global initiative to provide tools that prepare our employees before embarking on a new external facility, to ensure they have a positive experience.

In Norway, we have planned an annual workshop with all women working in field positions, where the primary goal is transparency, and emphasising Axess' unwavering support for our employees.

To give all our employees equal chance to succeed in their roles with management responsibilities, such as project management, we have conducted leadership training in 2023 through a third-party for employees at Axess AS and Axess Technologies. This is an important initiative to ensure that everyone gets the upskilling they need to manage their roles.

To improve gender equality in our company and improve the general knowledge on diversity and anti-discrimination, we will implement more training on diversity and inclusion for our management and employees in the future.

## Work environment forum

In 2023, we established the work environment forum in Norway and had our first few meetings. The main goal of this is to build competence and a culture where anyone at Axess feels comfortable speaking up on behalf of one another if they observe discrimination or harassment, as it is often easier than speaking up for oneself.

We had one meeting with some of the women working in field, to share experiences and hear how they could benefit from a forum like this. We also had a meeting with the management of Axess AS and Axess Technologies to talk about discrimination in general, and how we can use a forum like this to strengthen our work environment. The work environment forum in Norway will consist of a few online meetings throughout the year, and focus on different topics related to our work environment. This initiative is starting with Axess Norway, but other regions will be encouraged to follow. This forum is open to all employees who are interested, not excluding anyone.

## Communication

As part of our work with inclusion, we evaluate the way we communicate, both internally and externally, as this is the way in which we are perceived by our employees, customers, future employees, and the society at large. We understand that what we post could directly affect the diversity within Axess, and our social media policy sets the guidelines for how we communicate.

In 2023, we reviewed the way we have communicated in our job openings, to make sure the language we use is inclusive and that they target a wide enough group of people. While we have improved here in 2023 at Axess Norway, we should make sure this is consistent for Axess globally going forward.

Internal communication is something we did not focus as much on in 2023, but it is even more important than everything else we do to foster inclusion and for our employees to understand what we as a company are thinking around inclusion and diversity. This is something we should focus more on in 2024.



In 2023, we promoted diversity through many of our posts in social media. We featured six women in a post for International Women's Day. For Diversity Day, we made a collage with videos taken at most of our offices around the world, to showcase our global team. In addition to our employee Q&A articles that we call "meet our people", we also introduced "passion stories" this year, which are videos with an in-depth view of some of our employees' passions in life and at work. So far, we have published one story from Scotland, two from South Africa, and one from Norway, and we are working to develop more content to proudly show off our employees. In addition to this, we also published an article interviewing many parents working different positions at Axess about their work-life balance.

## Recruitment

We have focused on improving the gender balance at Axess Group for several years, and in 2023 we finally managed not only to improve the gender balance in recruitment, but also the overall gender balance in our company. We will continue to work on this, but also start using our experience and positive results from working with gender balance, to improve our efforts towards diversity in general.

Effective measures that we will continue to work with are:

- Evaluate what competences we need today, and in the future, and avoid demanding qualifications that might be disqualifying otherwise qualified candidates.
- Be open to a wider variety of engineering backgrounds for many positions.
- Continue to focus on how to attract (and retain) women with long(er) work experience.

Things we should improve in 2024 are:

- Be more present at important recruitment events.
- Evaluate more in-depth how we communicate in our job advertisements to determine if they could be discriminatory when evaluated across all discrimination grounds.

It is very important that our recruitment process follows the correct order, to make sure we do not discriminate any of the involved candidates. We shall always choose the right candidate based on their qualifications for the job, and look for personal qualities that they might have that are relevant for the job. We will have to continue to evaluate our processes, to make sure that we do not deviate from these criteria to improve any metrics.

## Gender pay gap

The investigation into gender pay gap at Axess Norway has not shown evidence of any systematic gender pay gap. However, we have always had a focus on evaluating all our employees against statistics of salary levels, to ensure that women and men both have a salary that is reflective of their experience and their year of graduation. Our employee and union representatives are also active parties in the salary adjustments each year, and they focus on each employee's gap towards the statistics. Men and women of same graduation year are always treated equally.

In 2024, we should focus more on the topic of gender pay gap, especially through more collaboration with our employee representatives, so that they always have equality matters in mind. This will strengthen their perspective on gender pay gap going into this year's salary adjustment. We should also evaluate how employees with degrees that are outside of what our unions represent, are taken care of in terms of good statistics for salary growth.

We should also consider if it is possible to conduct a global gender pay gap assessment, as it is equally important for us that all women and men across Axess Group are given equal pay for equal work.

## Reporting systems

We have a vision that our anti-discrimination work will be so open and transparent that we can have a continuous dialogue with our employees about challenges we face. Because of this, we do not solely rely on a reporting system to do everything for us. However, it is extremely important to have a system to address human rights, identify any possible breach on our ethical guidelines, laws, corruption, economic crime, harassment or discrimination, privacy protection, rights and protection of individuals, serious environmental hazards, or conflicts of interest.

At Axess, we have a confidential Whistleblower system, where the users can choose to be anonymous, and all alerts are treated in strict confidence. Here, our employees (internal SharePoint) and externals (through our website) may report concerns about actual or suspected cases of unacceptable behaviour that could adversely affect the company or individuals. Our internal Improvement Report system can also be used if our employees have minor non-sensitive observations, comments, or feedback on inclusion, diversity or discrimination that needs to be addressed to someone in the company. The employee satisfaction survey is another channel for our employees to anonymously share their own experiences, thoughts, and challenges that they see.

Through our structured work with equality and diversity, we have also realised the importance of training our managers and safety representatives on discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment, so that they are prepared to take care of our employees with utmost professionalism if anything occurs. All our employees should feel confident to address any issues with their nearest leader, HR or any of our safety representatives at any given time, and we need to continuously work to earn this trust.

## Work-life balance

### Flexibility

Most employees at Axess Group have great flexibility at work, allowing them to adapt to life outside of work when necessary and to maintain our "passion in life, passion at work" philosophy. Our GPTW survey also monitors our employees' experiences of work-life balance, and we pay special attention to the trends we see there and discuss this with local management annually.

### Parental leave

Axess is following the Working Environment Act on entitlement to leave and benefit for parents in Norway. This is independent of gender and we support fathers to take a balanced part of the total parental leave.

### Pregnancy

Axess' working regulations states that pregnant employees shall not work offshore or in the field, and that alternative work shall be arranged when necessary. The reason behind this statement is to avoid potential chemical or noise exposure, as well as burdensome or unreasonable stressful work for pregnant employees.

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