



INFRAFRONTIER

Gender Equality Plan

Written by:

Fei Song, Hilke Ehlich, and Asrar Ali Khan
Version 01, 14 Dec 2022

Approval by Board of Directors:

Neuherberg,

Date, Signature
Martin Hrabě de Angelis

16/12/2022

Date, Signature
Daniela Sommer

15.12.2022

Gender Equality Plan

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1. Introduction

One of the prominent challenges facing gender balance in biomedical research is the 'leaky pipeline' phenomenon which refers to the lack of retention of women in academic careers and their significantly lower likelihood to reach top academic positions. Other serious issues hampering career development of women in academics include a highly varied spectrum of gender climate at institutions, disparity in gender-specific rank and leadership, gender-based inequity in compensation and a disproportionate burden of family responsibilities.

Based on this information, Carr et al.¹ used the Bronfenbrenner socio-ecological model to develop strategies at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, academic community, and policy levels (Figure 1). These include addressing implicit gender bias, lack of access and support of mentors, compensating the gender gap etc.

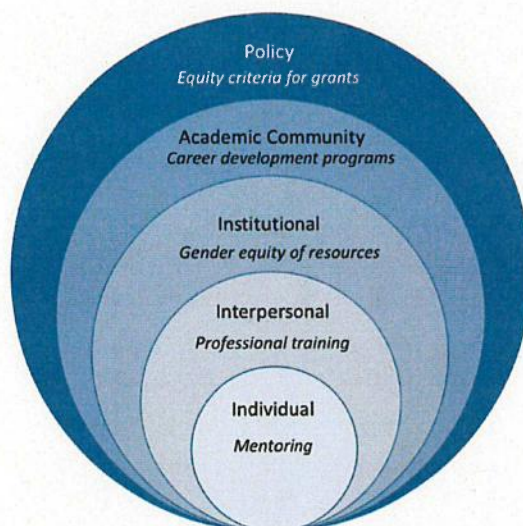


Figure 1: The potential levels of interventions for gender Equity in biomedical sciences. Adapted from Carr et al.

Research Infrastructures (RIs) like INFRAFRONTIER operate at the Community/Policy levels and relevant strategies at this level for gender balance include:

¹ Carr et al., A Summary Report from the Research Partnership on Women in Science Careers, PMID: 30003480

- Support and expand career advancement programs
- Abolish implicit gender bias especially in recruitment
- Incorporating gender dimensions to RI services, outreach and projects
- Promote career flexibility and a healthy work-life balance

The need for a gender balance policy was further highlighted in a 2018 survey² among RIs for the CORBEL project (Grant number 654248) which was carried out by the INFRAFRONTIER GmbH and that showed that few RIs have an Equal Opportunities Policy in place. At the time of the survey, several RIs were planning to implement such a policy and a similarly large proportion of RIs completely lacked it. In the meantime, the situation has changed. With the Horizon Europe 2021-2022 work programme (and beyond) a Gender Equality Plan is required as an essential eligibility criterion.

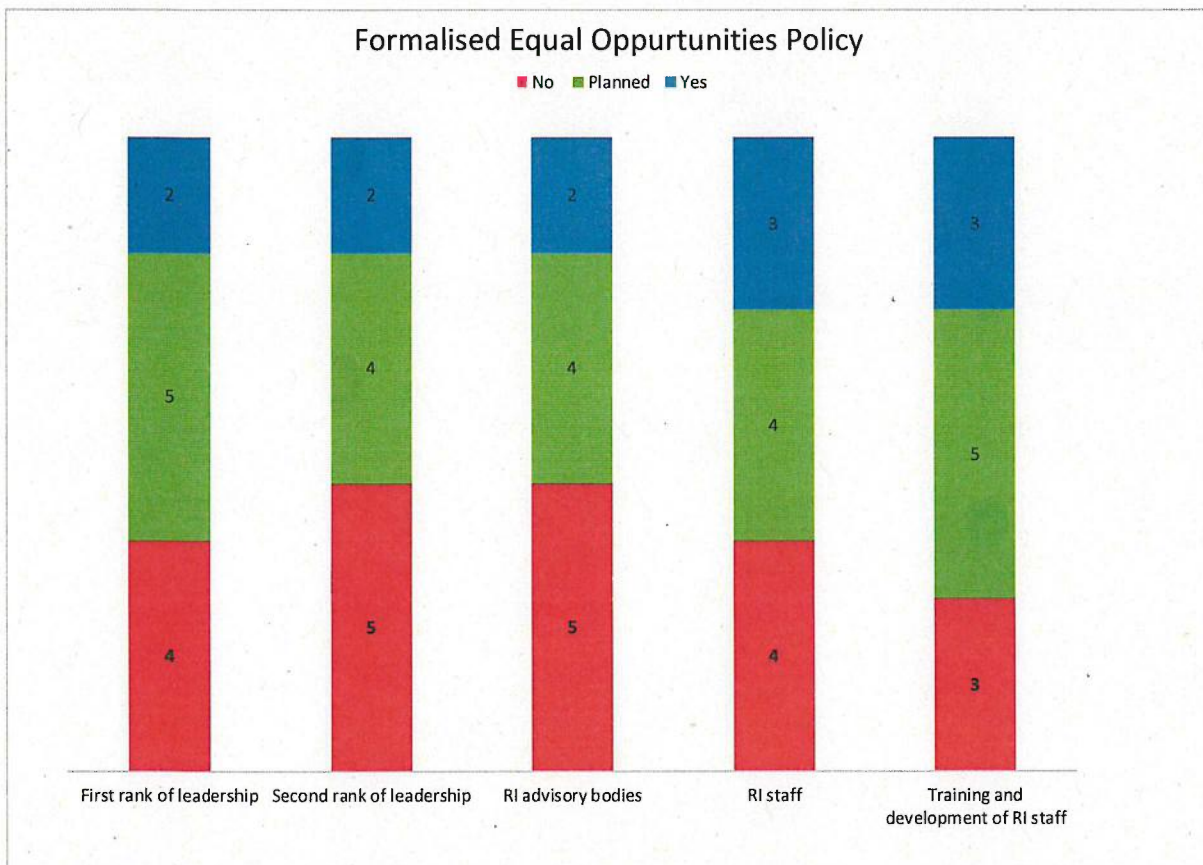


Figure 2: Response to the presence of a Formalised Equal Opportunities Policy from 11 CORBEL RIs

² Ali Khan, Asrar, & Raess, Michael. (2018). CORBEL Equal Opportunities Survey and Recommendations. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1441066>

2. Definition and Scope

In RIs, like biomedical research institutes, equal treatment and in particular gender equality benefits by improving the quality and relevance of processes by attracting and retaining more talented staff and ensuring that everyone can maximize their potential throughout the career path. Guided by the set of commitments and actions described in this Gender Equality Plan (GEP), INFRAFRONTIER GmbH / ERIC actively strives to create a work environment with equal rights and opportunities for all employees and incorporate gender equality into its organisational culture. This entails creating a favourable work-life balance for all employees, striving for gender balance in all leadership and decision-making roles, and gender equality in recruitment process and career development.

Via the INFRAFRONTIER partners, INFRAFRONTIER offers a host of biomedical services, funds user projects via trans-national access calls and organises outreach activities. The INFRAFRONTIER GEP also introduces the gender equality dimension to these activities.

The INFRAFRONTIER GEP is applicable for the INFRAFRONTIER hub, the INFRAFRONTIER GmbH / ERIC, and via some of the coordination activities, also reaches out to the INFRAFRONTIER partner organisations.

Based on an assessment by the EC on organisational procedures and practices to identify (potential) gender bias³, the INFRAFRONTIER Gender Equality Plan aims at identifying and implementing innovative strategies to correct any bias by

1. Setting targets and monitoring progress via indicators
2. Performing regular re-evaluation reviews.

It is in compliance with the four mandatory process-related requirements of the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criteria and contains objectives from the 5 content-related building blocks suggested by the European Commission⁴. These recommendations have been adjusted to INFRAFRONTIER GmbH / ERIC and will be adapted with the management and operation in the organisation.

The INFRAFRONTIER Gender Equality Plan is publicly available at www.infrarontier.eu and is updated by regular data collection and monitoring

³ European Commission Communication on ‘A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth’ (COM(2012) 392 final)

⁴ EC Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (2021) Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/876509>

activities. It is approved by INFRAFRONTIER's Managing Directors and has dedicated resources to monitor and implement it.

3. Dimensions

3.1 Work-life balance

Objectives

Maintain and expand INFRAFRONTIER's high standards in work-life balance:

- Actively promote a favourable work-life balance by supporting staff absence due to maternity, paternity, parental leave, dependent care etc.
- Reintegrate staff after career breaks (e.g., parental leave, long illness) by exploring and implementing measures to facilitate their reintegration (e.g., "stufenweise Wiedereingliederung" (progressive reintegration)) and promote 'Back to Work' support among staff.
- Pursue flexible working time arrangements, e.g.:
 - Part-time working to staff when full-time is infeasible.
 - Reporting flexible working hours like a "timesheet" or "hour bank"
 - Measures like remote working mode to avoid imbalanced travel-work hours and for staff that have personal caring responsibilities

Measures

- Facilitate parental or care leave for the eligible employees
- Continue support for flexible working time and working place arrangements (part-time and mobile work)
- Continue support for caring responsibilities (e.g., "Kindergartengeld", "Kinderbetreuungszuschuss")
- Continue advice and support on improving work-life balance, for example adapting workload (e.g., flexible tasks adjustment) and reintegration of staff after career pause (e.g., mentor/support pair)

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

- Requested vs. approved parental leave duration
- Part-time working contracts granted

Targets

	Baseline (2021)
Whenever possible, approval of requested parental or care leave duration	100%
Whenever possible, granting of requested part-time contracts	100%

3.2 Gender Balance in leadership and decision-making

Objective

Promote and maintain gender balance in INFRAFRONTIER GmbH / ERIC leadership and decision-making roles and eliminate individual, organisational and social obstacles to women's representation in such roles.

Measures

- Promote gender balance through proposing gender quotas in leadership positions
- Provide all decision-makers and leaders with gender equality training
- Examine and, as necessary, adapt processes and procedures for selection and appointment of staff on decision-making bodies

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

- Gender balance in leadership and decision-making roles

Targets

	Baseline (2021)
Gender balance among Directors and Head of Units	25% women, 75% men
Gender balance among the Scientific and Technical Advisory Board	50% women, 50% men
Gender balance among the External Evaluation Committee	17% women, 83% men
Gender balance among Members attending the GmbH Council meetings*	42% women, 58% men

* The Power of Attorney for some of the GmbH Council Members is shared between different representatives. Therefore, this target is depicted as a range. Once the transition of the GmbH into an ERIC is completed, the Assembly of Members or a respective dedicated board will replace the role of the Council and will be monitored instead.

3.3 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Objectives

Ensure gender equality in INFRAFRONTIER GmbH / ERIC recruitment process, and employee career progression.

Measures

- Address gender equality in job advertisements, e.g., continue to involve gender equality expertise in formulation of job advertisements and use of gender neutral language
- Ensure unbiased candidate selection. As far as possible, women and men to be equally represented in selection committees
- Provide gender equality training to selection committee members
- Ensure that all genders are equally considered for voluntary career progression opportunities, e.g., for professional internal or external training courses

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

- Overall gender distribution in INFRAFRONTIER GmbH / ERIC
- Gender distribution in candidate selection committees
- Gender of applicants for a job listing
- Gender of personnel participating in professional trainings

Targets

	Baseline (2021)
Gender balance among personnel in INFRAFRONTIER GmbH / ERIC	50% women, 50% men
Gender balance candidate selection committees	50% women, 50% men
Gender balance among applicants for a job advertisement	33% women, 67% men
Gender balance among personnel participating in professional trainings	50% women, 50% men

3.4 Integration of the gender dimension into projects, services, and outreach content

Objective

Integrate gender equality aspect in projects, service offers, and events organised by INFRAFRONTIER GmbH / ERIC

Measures

- Ensure that all genders are equally considered for research projects and service offers (like transnational access calls or any open calls) organised by INFRAFRONTIER GmbH / ERIC
- Ensure that all genders are equally considered in INFRAFRONTIER organised outreach events like conferences; strive for gender balance among speakers / chairs

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

- Gender distribution in applicants for INFRAFRONTIER service offers
- Gender distribution in selected user proposals for INFRAFRONTIER service offers
- Gender distribution in presenting or chairing sessions at INFRAFRONTIER organised meetings and conferences

Targets

	Baseline (2021)
Gender balance in applicants for service offers	9,5% women, 90,5% men
Gender balance in selected user proposals for INFRAFRONTIER service offers	20% women, 80% men
Gender balance among presenters and session chairs at INFRAFRONTIER organised meetings and conferences	34% women, 66% men

3.5 Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

Objective

Establish and codify the expected behaviours of employees including the actions that are considered sexual harassment. In addition, establish a culture of zero tolerance towards gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

Measures

- Creation of a policy against sexual harassment, which includes behaviour, reporting, investigation, support for victims and disciplinary measures and prosecution
- Creation of an atmosphere / environment where complaints can be reported safely

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

- Complaints registered
- Cases resolved

Targets

	Baseline (2021)
No complaints	0 complaints
All sexual harassment cases could be resolved	n.a.

3.6 Integration of the gender dimension into organisational culture

Objective

Integrate gender equality into the organisational culture, principles, and policies.

Measures

- Establish a Gender Equality Specialist Team to drive forward measures and monitor progress
- Organise gender equality awareness trainings for the whole organisation
- Integrate the gender dimension in the Quality Management System and relevant organisational policies like data management policy etc.

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

- Gender Equality Specialist Team tasks and meeting minutes
- Quality management documents adapted
- Organisational policies adapted
- Annual gender equality awareness trainings organised

Targets

	Baseline (2021)
All quality management documents adapted	29% adapted
All organisational policies adapted	0% adapted
Annual gender equality awareness trainings organised	0 training / year

4. Monitoring and reporting

Progress towards gender equality in connection with all mentioned objectives is monitored quarterly and reviewed annually, focusing particularly on the changes required to promote future developments involving equality principles. The GEP is updated as required but at least once every three years.

Additional or adapted objectives and targets on gender equality will be proposed as needed and based on availability of data.

The data collected in the framework of the Gender Equality Plan monitoring process will be presented and discussed internally annually within the GmbH / ERIC.

5. Dedicated resources

A dedicated inter-departmental team will handle all GEP tasks, monitoring, and dissemination and be a part of an inter-RI gender equality expert working group (like the ERIC Forum). Additionally, external gender equality experts will be consulted when needed. Gender equality activities are part of the Annual Work Programme.

General Management is responsible and the first contact point for facilitating work-life balance like parenteral leave and elder care, as well as for recruitment and training. The Project Management team takes care of integrating gender equality aspects in projects and service provision, while the Communications and Event Management team is responsible for the same in all outreach activities. The Quality Management team is responsible adapting the

INFRAFRONTIER Quality Management System with related gender equality aspects.

6. Responsibilities

The Managing Directors of the INFRAFRONTIER GmbH / ERIC are responsible for the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan.