



**Institute
of Experimental
Medicine, CAS**

IEM Gender Equality Plan for 2022-2024



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



IEM Gender Equality Plan for 2022-2024

(IEM Gender Equality Plan)

Motto:

Motto: "The world is not divided into women and men; the world is composed of women and men."
(Dagmar Zelenková, Lawyer)

Introduction

The equality of men and women is one of the fundamental values of the modern European democratic society. The equal access of men and women to education, employment, and participation in society is generally regarded as a matter of elementary justice.

The Institute of Experimental Medicine is a modern European research institution that not only ranks among recognized basic research centers in the field of biomedicine, but is also committed to maintaining a working environment based on European democratic principles, specifically adherence to the principle of equal opportunities, the observance of fundamental human rights, and non-discriminatory approach in all areas of its operations. Apart from efforts aimed at obtaining and maintaining the HR Excellence in Research Award, we are dedicated to improving the quality of the IEM's internal environment by various means, including the incorporation of the gender dimension through the adoption of appropriate measures in accordance with the European Union's gender equality targets for the years 2020-2025. At the local level, the relevant efforts include the adoption of the principles laid down in the Gender Equality Support Plan of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports for 2021-2024.

The IEM undertakes to enforce the principle of gender equality in all areas of its operations as an integral part of its obligations to both employees and other stakeholders, with a view to discharging its commitment to transparency, equality, responsibility, balance of private and professional life, and other pertinent endeavors. The framework for identifying and implementing measures in the area of gender equality at the IEM is laid down under the Gender Equality Plan (GEP).

Strategic Starting Points

The IEM is aware that a considerable degree of progress has been achieved in creating a democratic, equal, and non-discriminatory environment thanks to adopting the European Charter for Researchers, receiving the Ethnic Friendly Employer status, and building its brand based on measures adopted in connection with the implementation of the HR Award Action Plan. At the same time, the IEM realizes that its principal asset is its workforce and its human capital, where employee satisfaction, loyalty, and perception of academic freedom are the principal factors for taking full advantage of the intellectual potential of workers and for achieving scientific progress. To accomplish this strategic objective, the

IEM is committed to creating the best possible working conditions through a variety of approaches, including the implementation of the measures outlined in the GEP.

Gender Equality Analysis – General Considerations

The Gender Equality Plan has been compiled in conformity to the HORIZON 2020 project and the other documents mentioned above. The theoretical aspects of the plan rely on the Gender Audit Standard recommended by the Department of Human Rights and Minorities of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic published in 2016. The Gender Equality Plan focuses on the following areas:

- Harmonizing private and professional life and organizational culture,
- Gender balance in management and decision-making,
- Gender equality in recruitment and career advance,
- Integration of the gender dimension into the content of research and teaching,
- Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

The objectives of the audit included:

- Determining the extent to which the principles of equality of men and women are implemented into the IEM's governance structure,
- Mapping the degree of importance assigned by employees to gender-related issues and ways in which relevant measures are carried out in real life, and the degree of their actual impact on improving the equality of men and women in all areas of private and professional lives of IEM employees,
- Identifying bottlenecks as regards the equality of men and women as well as remaining areas not covered by hitherto adopted measures,
- Collecting data for compiling the Gender Equality Plan and promoting the objectives of the HR Award Action Plan with a view to meeting the requirements for taking part in European research and development programs, particularly the currently underway HORIZON Europe program.

Methodology and Deliverables

The GEP has been created based on a multifaceted gender audit carried out at the IEM at the turn of 2021/22. Findings outlined in the plan stem from several thematic areas that were assessed by the Gender Equality Guarantor. The process included an analysis of the IEM's internal document as well as empirical surveys among employees, complemented with semi-structured interviews. Overall, the process relied on the following sources of information:

- Analysis of the IEM's internal guidelines, policies, and internal documents and assessment of their content in terms of the incorporation of the principle of gender equality,
- Compilation and analysis of gender-related statistical data,
- Secondary analysis of the outcome of a sociological survey complemented with gender-related issues, equal opportunities, non-discriminatory conduct, etc.,
- One-on-one interviews with employees selected across the workforce spectrum,
- Group interviews conducted in the form of seminars and soft-skill workshops.

The relevant conclusions and recommendations were produced based on an analysis of the above information sources using qualitative and quantitative investigation methods. The examined topics

included the perception of the internal culture at the IEM, the balance of private and professional life, equal opportunities in the career advance of men and women, measures aimed against sexual harassment and other forms of oppression, however motivated, the knowledge of employment-related rights and ways of mounting effective protection, the existence and publication of gender-oriented statistics, the creation of conditions for gender mainstreaming, the application of gender-related principles in recruitment, and other areas. One-on-one interviews were conducted across the workforce spectrum in a way ensuring that the respondents included an equal share of men and, at the same time, they differed in terms of age, professional experience, duration of employment at the IEM, specialization, position in the organizational hierarchy, and other factors. Group interviews and workshops were conducted with randomly formed groups of scientists and non-scientists, doctoral students, department directors and deputy directors, administration and technical support staff, and others.

Another separately assessed area was the allocation of human and financial resources to gender equality issues.

Allocation of Human Resources

Assigned as the person for compiling the GEP and for subsequently implementing the process has been the Gender Equality Guarantor whose formal education in humanities, experience with the implementation of non-discriminatory management of human resources, and experience from working as an ombudsman responsible for protecting worker rights provide a guarantee of practical and theoretical expertise for meeting the IEM's ambitions in the area of gender equality. For maximum efficiency, the position of HR Manager for HR Award will be combined with the role of Gender Equality Guarantor. In performing tasks, the Gender Equality Guarantor will liaise with the IEM Director in regard to defining concepts, with the Accounting and Economic Department in regard to compiling remuneration and other statistics, with the Project Support and Technology Transfer Department, and with the directors of individual departments. The Gender Equality Guarantor will submit reports on thereby performed actions, on the fulfillment of the plan, and on achieved results to the IEM's management at regular meetings. Once a year, the Gender Equality Guarantor will submit a report on activities carried out during the preceding period to the IEM Board. The annual report will be a transparent public document available on the intranet to all employees and other stakeholders within the IEM.

Gender Issues at the IEM

Based on the analyses mentioned above, the conclusion can be drawn that gender-related issues are not perceived by employees as a serious problem. This finding is in part due to the fact that the term gender is viewed by many in a way that borders on being termed negative. A closer look at gender-related issues shows that employees are not familiar with the precise meaning of the concept of gender and the circumstances under which gender issues affect their lives, as they associate the term with the feminist movement and ascribe to it numerous negative connotations. Only during the survey, interviews, and other actions, employees became acquainted with the actual meaning of the term gender and ways in which gender affects their everyday lives. Subsequently, they admitted that many gender-related issues are unresolved or require a solution. The general views considering the individual aspects of gender issues have been analyzed and summarized in the following text.

Internal Organizational Culture

Gender issues are incorporated in a number of the IEM's internal regulations, in part intentionally and in part indirectly. They are based on the provisions of the Labor Code, which guarantee the equality of men and women in addition to equality in regard to religion, race, sex, and other issues. The equality provisions laid down in the Labor Code are reflected in the IEM's other key documents, including the Code of Conduct, the Career Advance Policy, and the Rules of Employment. In some documents, however, employee protection in terms of gender is missing, such as the Attestation Policy, where the gender composition of the attestation committee is not defined. It is therefore recommended to revise all internal documents and amend them by adding the gender dimension. The optimal solution would be creating a separate guideline aimed at ensuring gender equality. Another issue is the necessity to improve the awareness of the aforementioned documents among employees because their supervisors often fail to inform staff members of new or revised versions of internal documents, which results in poor knowledge of the systemic parameters of worker protection on the part of many employees.

Balance of Men and Women in Managerial Roles

It has been determined that men and women account for 70% and 30% of the IEM's staff, respectively. During the onsite survey, this proportion was interpreted as a natural consequence of sectorial preferences in the field of biology, medicine, and other similar fields as well as the result of the different interests and roles in life of men and women. Many of the women participating in the survey presented their role as scientist and researcher as a certain luxury that they are able to afford thanks to the successful career of their partner in a field that is more financially rewarding. A remarkable finding is the fact that the higher the level of the organizational hierarchy, the more equal the ratio of men and women, as the number of men and women in managerial positions is balanced. Hence, there is a higher proportion of women in white-collar and lower scientific roles. Conversely, the share of women and men in positions at higher levels of the organizational hierarchy is more balanced. Nevertheless, the higher statistical share of women in managerial roles, however it might appear desirable, does not necessarily mean that women have equal access to high-level positions.

Harmonizing Private and Professional Life (Work-Life Balance)

Employees consider as positive the various ways offered by the IEM to balance the needs of their private and professional lives, which includes parental issues and various other personal matters. The IEM offers five weeks of vacation, i.e. one week over the legal requirements, flexible working hours, part-time arrangements, home office arrangements, and benefits for employees enrolled in a study program. There is a kindergarten, two cafeterias, and a gym inside the IEM complex. During the survey, employees tended to make demands for additional equipment for the workplace, as they consider the way the systemic is configured to allow balancing professional and personal life appropriate. A problem mentioned by some was the option to work during maternity/parental leave, reintegration into the workplace after parental leave, and the absence of assistance with search for a new position.

Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Advance

A positive finding is the existence of Guideline 19/2021, Human Resources Processes – Rules and Principles for Filling Vacant Positions, which incorporates provisions aimed at balancing the composition of selection committees in terms of gender and at ensuring the objective evaluation of the outcome of interviews and tests. Nonetheless, the IEM lacks detailed gender-related rules for subsequent career advance, such as the existence of suitable provisions in the Attestation and Career Advance Policies. In addition, the reasons why departing employees leave the IEM are not determined by means of an exit interview.

Gender Dimension in Research and Teaching

At present, the options to incorporate the gender dimension into research, science, and, where applicable, teaching appear limited. Considering the lack of specialists on the labor market and the limited availability of scientists and researchers working or willing to work in the IEM's specific field of expertise, the composition of research teams appears arbitrary. As a result, gender balance cannot be usually taken into account to a significant extent, despite the fact that doing so would be desirable. The primary consideration is meeting qualification requirements and, oftentimes, a limited number of candidates, where the willingness to work in lower-level scientific roles is typical mainly for women. For interest on the part of men is limited by the systemic nature of financing research and science through time-limited grants and the consequent job insecurity. In that regard, a positive finding is the fact that provisions pertaining to ethical aspects of teaching and studying are incorporated in the IEM's Code of Conduct, which prevents teachers from abusing their authority and relations from developing beyond the formal interaction between the student and the teacher. The Code of Conduct also contains a commitment to affirmatory treatment of persons undergoing change of sexual identity. In both of the above cases, however, the Code of Conduct only contains a declaration of the principles of conduct which the IEM requires its employees to adhere to. Even though the polled employees know who to contact in the event of a violation of the principles of conduct, their responses differed to a significant degree, as there is no uniform process, framework, and guidelines for resolving potential problems.

Measures against Gender-Based Violence, including Sexual Harassment

The survey showed that many employees have in the past encountered some form of undesirable conduct, whether perpetrated by a colleague or a supervisory employee. Oftentimes, the incidents occurred in a distant past and were not investigated. Considering the time that has passed and the lack of willingness on the part of the respondents to discuss the incidents in detail, the objectivity of statements to that effect and other relevant aspects are impossible to be determined. Nonetheless, the fact remains that employees are often discontented by the comportment of their colleagues and supervisors. However, there is no information or manual that would describe the individual types of undesirable conduct and abuse of authority, which would depict model situations of such behavior and allow employees to identify them in an unambiguous manner. The manipulative tactics of individuals engaging in aggressive behavior are often borderline, and employees therefore hesitate whether the actions in question correspond to the established organizational culture or, conversely, the expression of violence, oppression, or harassment. The situation could be significantly improved by the creation of a manual providing employees with guidance regarding action they can take in such cases and by the appointment of a professionally trained officer who would be responsible for resolving such incidents and who would possess adequate powers to that effect. Likewise, the presence of an

ombudsman protecting employees' rights would have a preventative effect in regard to individuals liable to engage in aggressive behavior.

Allocation of Financial and Human Resources

The IEM considers fulfilling the GEP one of its strategic priorities that will be conducive to cultivating the working environment, building an internal culture, and improving relationships in the domain of research and science in both the Czech and European context. The IEM is committed to allocating adequate resources from its budgets to the implementation of the proposed measures, to financing actions of the appointed Gender Equality Guarantor, and to facilitating the fulfillment of all of the measures aimed at supporting gender equality in regard to all facets of the IEM's operations.

Creation of the Gender Equality Plan

The abovementioned methods and findings have been used to prepare the Gender Equality Plan for the years 2022-2024 in regard to all social interactions among employees and thereby performed work. The plan lays down the individual adopted measures that respond to findings and recommendations ensuing from the survey and identifies measurable indicators wherever possible. In addition, the plan defines the responsibilities of individual workers and departments for the implementation of measures in specific areas, the estimated value of funds allocated to implemented measures, and the time frame within which measures are to be implemented.

The Gender Equality Plan has been drafted in accordance with the eligibility criteria of the plan for the equality women and men under the HORIZON Europe framework program for research and innovation for the years 2021-2027. In addition, its content promotes the fulfillment of some of the points of the HR Award Action Plan adopted for the years 2021-2023.

Plan Fulfillment Oversight

The IEM is committed to fulfilling the GEP by means of regular consultations between the IEM's management and the Gender Equality Guarantor. The consultations will focus on the fulfillment of individual targets of the plan, obstacles hindering such fulfillment, and ways of ensuring that individual measures are implemented within the required time frame. The Gender Equality Guarantor will submit annual reports describing the degree of fulfillment of the GEP, the achieved state of affairs, the effect of adopted measures, and areas where delays in the fulfillment of the plan occurred or the plan remained unfulfilled. Considering that the GEP has been adopted for a period of three years, the Gender Equality Guarantor will submit an amended plan for the subsequent years where necessary, insofar as issues emerge that were not incorporated in the original plan. The annual report will include gender-related statistical data from the monitored areas so as to allow performing a comparative analysis of relevant developments in individual years both in individual departments and within the IEM as a whole.

Declaration

On behalf of the Institute of Experimental Medicine, the Director hereby undertakes to **fulfill the Gender Equality Plan** for the years 2022-2024 and to **allocate financial and human resources** for the fulfillment thereof. The IEM will seek additional funds under operational programs pertaining to the

area in question. Furthermore, the IEM will pursue efforts to **improve the awareness** of gender-related issues among employees, students, and other private and corporate stakeholders wherewith the IEM collaborates with a view to taking part in cultivating the public space by promoting gender equality. Likewise, the IEM will **inform employees** of participation in HORIZON Europe and to underscore the fact that the GEP is part of the program.



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Miroslava Anděrová
IEM Director