

Gender Equality Plan 2022 - 2025

The Institute for Research in Biomedicine (IRB) aims at creating an open, tolerant, collaborative and inclusive environment, where all the IRB community members safely and freely engage in scientific discussions and discovery and have the opportunity to fully develop and realize their career plan. To create this environment, interactions among all members of the IRB community have to be based at all times on mutual respect. As the IRB is an equal opportunity employer, all its employees receive consideration without regard to race, sex, national origin, or any other characteristic.

The IRB can also rely on the Equal Opportunities Service ([link](#)) of the Università della Svizzera italiana (USI), to which the IRB is affiliated and with which the IRB shares:

1) the same mission:

- providing quality education, conducting internationally relevant scientific research;
- contributing to the development of the region by enabling the transfer of knowledge, innovation, entrepreneurship and cultural and scientific debate;

and

2) the same values: quality, openness and responsibility.

With employees from 24 different nationalities (data from August 2022), the IRB benefits from an international and multi-cultural environment. Approximately 55% of all the IRB employees, 66% of the IRB students and 47% of the IRB Postdoctoral fellows are women, thus, the institute is close to gender parity. However, among some categories of personnel, also due to the type of work (e.g. administrative and technical personnel), the numbers lie below gender equality.

Based on these premises, the IRB has elaborated a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) that will be further developed in the coming years. Its main goal is to establish a culture of respect, promoting diversity and enhancing equal opportunity.

This IRB GEP aims at listing a set of actions to promote gender equality through institutional and cultural change; to instil a culture of respect by creating a sense of belonging among the IRB community and to provide conducive conditions to a healthy work-life balance support.

1. Dedicated resources

The IRB has introduced measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment in its *“Directives on the protection of personality at the IRB in case of sexual harassment, mobbing and discrimination in the workplace”*. These are based on the art. 328 of the Swiss Code of Obligations (*“the employer must acknowledge and safeguard the employee’s personality rights, have due regard for his health and ensure that proper moral standards are maintained”*); on the Art. 6 para. 1 of the Swiss Federal Labour Law (*“the employer must take the necessary measures to protect the personal integrity of the employees”*); and on the Art.4 of the Swiss Federal act on gender equality (*“any harassing behaviour of a sexual nature or other behaviour related to the person’s sex that adversely affects the dignity of women or men in the workplace is discriminatory”*).

The IRB Direction as well as the IRB Human Resources Officer are committed to safeguarding a culture of respect and to promoting measures against gender-based violence. In addition, they pay particular attention to gender balance in the recruitment of employees where applications permit.

A culture of respect

The IRB aims at creating a collaborative and inclusive environment for all members of its community; thus, it has to guarantee that interactions be based at all times on mutual respect. Thus, the IRB has started a series of seminars (see under Training) to promote the institutional culture of respect, and to inform the employees on how they can find third-party neutral support in case they encounter difficulties in their working environment.

The IRB does not tolerate inappropriate behaviour that offends personal integrity, personal dignity and hinders equal opportunities. Harassment, bullying, discrimination, threatening behaviours and violence are all unacceptable at all levels of employment and the person committing the acts will face consequences, regardless of the status or position. Retaliation against people acting in good faith is also not tolerated.

Any employee experiencing inappropriate behaviour at any time has to report it immediately to the Human Resources Officer.

Promotion of gender equality

The IRB is flexible about working time arrangements to respect family commitments or health issues.

All curriculum vitae received upon job offer call or that spontaneously reach the IRB are evaluated based on the scientific or operational (administration, technical services) requirements needed to perform the activities for which personnel is necessary. As an equal opportunity employer, the IRB considers for employment all qualified applicants without regard to race, sex, national origin, or any other characteristic.

The IRB supports academic studies and occupational activity on the one hand and family commitments on the other. To this goal, the IRB Grant Officers always specifically promote national and international funding opportunities dedicated to women or to childcare support available to conciliate career and family commitment.

Particular attention is paid to gender balance the composition of decisional committees, list of seminar speakers, list for the PhD program or for any other conferences / workshops organized by the Institute or for the composition of any consortium responding to a funding opportunity.

2. Data collection and monitoring

The Human Resources Officer registers each employee on the Database of the USI, in which the gender is specified as well as the nationality. This local online database is always up to date, as the new employee cannot have internet access, informatic tools and server space if not registered on this platform. It is also a tool for conducting a high-quality gender equality audit/monitoring survey.

Upon Swiss Confederation's request, an analysis of wage parity has been performed in early 2022 on the 2021 wages. The result of the survey demonstrates that there is no wage discrimination between men and women at the IRB.

3. Training

To illustrate and complement our "*Directives on the protection of personality at the IRB in case of sexual harassment, mobbing and discrimination in the workplace*", in 2021, the IRB started a series

of seminars to promote in the IRB community the culture of respect and to indicate how to prevent violations of personal integrity in the workplace.

For example, in 2021 Prof. Gisou van der Goot, Founding member of the Global Health Institute, School of Life Sciences, EPFL and Vice President EPFL for Responsible Transformation held the seminar “Towards an institutional culture of Respect” that has been recorded and is available as a podcast to all the IRB members, on the IRB internal website. This seminar raises awareness, among others, on how to ensure that everyone at the IRB has the opportunity to live up to their full potential, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or any disability.

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