



Gender Equality Plan for BIRA-IASB

Contributors:

Jana Cierkens, Christine Bingen, Stijn Calders, Philippe Iterbeke, Lucie Lamort, Arianna Piccialli

Contents

1	Introduction.....	3
2	Legislation.....	4
3	BIRA-IASB: Current state of play.....	7
3.1	Gendered Data	7
3.1.1	Whole staff	8
3.1.2	Age.....	8
3.1.3	Statute	9
3.1.4	Function.....	9
3.1.5	Gender by level.....	10
3.1.6	Leadership	10
3.1.7	Decision-making bodies.....	11
3.1.8	Identified data gaps.....	12
3.2	Evolution over the 10 last years	13
3.3	Existing measures	13
3.3.1	Work-life balance and organizational culture	14
3.3.2	Gender balance in leadership and decision-making	14
3.3.3	Gender Equality in recruitment and career progression.....	14
3.3.4	Integration of gender dimension into research and teaching content.....	16
3.3.5	Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment	17
4	Action plan.....	18
5	Conclusions, lessons learned and perspectives	32
6	Acronyms.....	33
7	Glossary	34
7.1	Sex	34
7.2	Gender.....	34
7.3	Gender mainstreaming.....	34
7.4	Gender equality	34
7.5	Intersectional gender approach	34

8	References.....	36
9	Appendix A: Overview of the International, European and Belgian legislation relevant for gender aspects.....	37
9.1	Legislation at international level	37
9.1.1	UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights	37
9.1.2	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 37	
9.1.3	International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Violence and Harassment Convention	38
9.2	Legislation at European level	38
9.2.1	Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union.....	38
9.2.2	European Charter and Code for Researchers.....	39
9.2.3	The Istanbul Convention (11 May 2011)	40
9.2.4	EU Framework programmes and related policies.....	41
9.3	Legislation at Belgian level	44
9.3.1	“Gender-mainstreaming law”, 12 January 2007	44
9.3.2	Law of 10 May 2007 against discriminations between women and men.....	45
9.3.3	National Recovery and Resilience Plan (30/4/2021).....	46
9.3.4	Royal Decree about the statute of Federal Employees (update from the “Statute” Royal Decree of 2/10/1937)	46
9.4	Legislation relevant for intersectional aspects.....	47
9.4.1	UN Convention on the Right of Persons with disabilities (CRPD)	47
9.4.2	EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025.....	48
9.4.3	EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation	48
9.4.4	EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025	49
9.4.5	Gender Action Plan III in EU external action	49
9.4.6	EC Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030	50
9.4.7	Belgian Federal Action Plan Handicap 2021-2024.....	50

1 Introduction

The present Gender Equality Plan (GEP) has been written by BIRA-IASB's Gender & Diversity team (G&D team) that was set up in response to a requirement of EC's Horizon Europe Framework Programme (FP). As of 01/01/2022, the FP programme requires all institutions that sign a grant agreement for European projects to have a GEP that complies with the requirements set by the European Commission. In particular, (1) the GEP has to be a public document disseminated throughout the institution and published on the institution's website; (2) resources must be allocated to promote gender equality, by funding dedicated personnel in charge of gender equality aspects or by reserving time for other people to work on gender equality; (3) sex- or gender-disaggregated data have to be collected and monitored across roles and levels of leadership, and an annual evaluation and reporting of the progress must be made and disseminated; and (4) training and capacity building must be foreseen to engage the whole organisation, to tackle gender biases in people and decisions, and to undertake joint actions on specific relevant topics.

The Horizon Europe Framework Programme provides a broad range of background information for the preparation of GEPs, including legal documents, recommendations, prescriptions of mandatory building blocks for the GEP, examples, courses, and trainings set up by projects funded by the EC, like the GE Academy project, UniSAFE, etc.

The G&D team based its work on these different sources and followed the approach proposed by the EC. The resulting work is a first version of BIRA-IASB's GEP. It is the aim and EC's requirement to update the GEP every year, based on the evolution of the situation and following an evidence-based approach.

The structure of the document is as follows: in a first part, we propose an overview of the legislation relevant to gender-based discrimination and violence. Next, we analyse BIRA-IASB's situation through a presentation of statistical data and an overview of the existing measures related to gender aspects. Finally, we present our action plan spread over six thematic areas: general actions, work-life balance, leadership and decision-making, recruitment and career progression, research and training, and gender-related violence, including sexual harassment. A glossary at the end provides the definition of the main concepts used in the context of gender studies.

2 Legislation

Gender aspects and the fight against gender-based discrimination are the object of many conventions, laws, and treaties at international (United-Nations), European and Belgian level. A detailed overview is provided in the [Appendix](#), and we briefly summarize the tools at our disposal for the purpose of this Gender Equality Plan.

The *UN Declaration of Human Rights* and the more specific *UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), both ratified by Belgium, proclaims the **equality in dignity and rights**, the **right for equal protection against any discrimination** and the **right to equal pay for equal work**. CEDAW imposes to its States Parties to take all appropriate measures for ensuring **equal conditions for career**, **access to studies**, and **equal opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants**.

In the European legislation, beyond the more general *Charter of fundamental rights of the EU*¹, a very specific tool, the *European Charter and Code for Researchers*² clarifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/or funders of researchers, in various aspects relevant for research like **non-discrimination**, working conditions including, amongst other, aspects of **work-life balance**, **funding and salaries**, and **gender balance**. This text was explicitly endorsed by at least 1309 institutions (a still growing number), including Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) and its Board of Directors³. More details are given about the European Charter and Code for Researchers in Appendix 1.

The *Istanbul Convention* provides a legal framework to prevent and combat violence against women, and imposes the **obligation to investigate allegations of violence, prosecute perpetrators, and protect and support the victims**.

Of particular relevance in the present context is the evolution of the successive EU Framework programmes and related policies in terms of gender equality. Since the *Communication on Women in Sciences in 1999*, gender equality has become a priority with the establishment of 3 objectives:

- **Gender equality in scientific careers**
- **Gender balance in decision-making**
- **Integration of the gender dimension in the content of Research and Innovation (R&I)**.

The objectives were gradually implemented throughout *Framework programmes FP7, Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe*, along 3 axes:

1. **Fixing the number of women:** the objective is increasing women's participation to R&I in order to reach gender equality.
2. **Fixing the organizations:** the objective is bringing structural and cultural changes in academia and research organizations to address barriers in gender equality. This is a major change, acknowledging the existence of a structural problem with respect to gender equality.
3. **Fixing the knowledge:** This last objective expresses the recognition that also knowledge may be gendered, and focusses on, wherever appropriate, integrating a gender-based analysis in the content of research, and including the gender dimension in all aspects and in the whole research cycle from literature review, to methodologies, implementation, and dissemination.

EC's priority to achieve gender equality is reflected in the *Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2024*⁴.

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

² <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter-code-researchers>

³ https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/cc-declarations/be_belspo.pdf

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

More detail about the evolution, content, and significance of the gender aspects in EC's framework programmes is given in the Appendix.

EC's legislative framework in terms of diversity was recently extended by the adoption of different action plans and strategic frameworks to combat *racism, discrimination against Roma, to promote LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer) equality, to protect the rights of persons with a disability*, as well as a *gender action plan for EU external action*. All these tools include relevant matters to be considered in an **intersectional approach of gender equality aspects**.

The *Horizon Europe framework programme* is based on a "Gender+" approach using an **intersectional approach to address gender equality aspects in R&I**, and **setting gender equality as a cross-cutting principle** to eliminate gender inequality and intersecting socio-economic inequalities. New concepts and requirements are:

- The introduction of the **requirement to have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP)** in place as eligibility criterion
- The allocation of specific funding to **support the development of inclusive gender equality plans** and for gender studies and intersectional research
- The **integration of the gender dimension into R&I** becomes a **requirement by default** across the whole programme
- Ensuring **gender balance in evaluation panels** and other relevant advisory bodies gets particular attention
- **Gender balance among researchers involved in projects** is strongly encouraged and will be taken into account for equally ranked proposals
- Specific flagship measures and activities are taken to promote women's participation and gender equality under the European Innovation Council.

At Belgian level, the *Gender-mainstreaming Law*⁵ (12 January 2007) implements European directives and imposes as a legal obligation for the government, each minister and their respective **administrations to integrate the gender dimension in all measures and policies**. In particular, administrations including the Federal Scientific Institutions like BIRA-IASB have the **obligation to provide gender-disaggregated statistics and relevant gender indicators** to assess the process of integrating the gender dimension in the governance, and in the realization of strategic objectives. The progress has to be reported in intermediate and final reports.

The *Law against discriminations between women and men (10 May 2007)* implements the European Directive for the application of the *Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union*. It assimilates discriminations based on sex reassignment, gender identity, or expression of gender, and **explicitly forbids direct or indirect discrimination, orders to discriminate, harassment and sexual harassment**. The Institute for the Equality of women and men ("Centre pour l'Égalité des Femmes et des Hommes"/ "Instituut voor de Gelijkheid van Vrouwen en Mannen")⁶, created in 2002, plays an important role in the application of the law, in terms of advice, support and legal assistance to victims. Another actor of importance is the Centre of equal chances and against racism (Centre pour l'égalité des chances et la lutte contre le racisme / Centrum voor gelijkheid van kansen en voor racismebestrijding), created in the 1993 to fight racism, and whose competences were extended in 2003 toward both racial and non-racial discriminations, including sexual orientation. This institute was renamed "UNIA"⁷ in February 2016.

⁵ In French: https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/fr/activites/gender_mainstreaming/loi_gender_mainstreaming; in Dutch: https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/activiteiten/gender_mainstreaming/wet_gender_mainstreaming

⁶ <https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be>

⁷ <https://www.unia.be>

In addition, the *National Recovery and Resilience Plan* of 30 April 2021 states that “*substantial progress has still to be made in some key domains*” including, amongst others, employment and education. A project “*Gender and work*” is led by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men.

Finally, an **intersectional approach** of gender equality and gender discriminations can rely on different laws, covering other aspects of diversity that have been adopted at European and Belgian level, such as the *EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025*, the *EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation*, the *LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025*, the *Gender Action Plan III – a priority of EU external action*, and the *Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030*. More details about these laws can be found in Appendix A.

Using an intersectional approach means that the gender aspects are considered following a cross-cutting approach taking into account other aspects of diversity⁸. The ensemble of laws above provides the necessary guidelines to promote gender equality as embedded in the broader theme of diversity. It is worth to emphasize the fact that pursuing gender equality means seeking equality *for all*, women, men, and non-binary people, by promoting harmonious and respectful relationships on the work floor, making it a better place for all.

⁸ Belspo’s priorities, in this respect, focusses on gender, handicap, racism, and poverty

3 BIRA-IASB: Current state of play

One of the most important aspects of this GEP is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current situation at BIRA-IASB. We have collected data and identified current measures. This information is useful and necessary to decide on relevant action points for this first GEP. They will also help us in the future to evaluate the progress.

The first section proposes a set of statistical data for the year 2020, as well as the evolution of some indicators during the 10 years prior to 2020. These statistical data are extracted from existing data made available, e.g., by the HR service and on the intranet. It is a request from EC's Horizon Europe and an important aspect in the action plan to refine and complete these statistics in the future, as a basis for the yearly monitoring required by EC. It should be emphasised that the purpose of this section is to propose currently available objective data about the current situation in terms of gender ratio, and not propose an analysis of the situation. Such analysis will be the object of the future monitoring of gender aspects imposed by Horizon Europe.

Another remark of importance is that all statistics presented below are disaggregated in two gender categories, namely "women" and "men". This situation, which does not consider non-binary people, corresponds to the currently available data wherein, to the best of our knowledge, no case of non-binary people is included. However, we aim at extending the gender categories to non-binary people in the future, in order to ensure a maximal inclusiveness in terms of gender. Furthermore, the aim is to introduce an intersectional approach whenever possible, to take into account other aspects like career stage, disability, colour, etc. in the statistics.

In §3.3, we present an overview of the existing measures currently in force at BIRA-IASB, in the scope of the five recommended thematic areas: work-life balance and organizational culture, gender balance in leadership and decision-making, gender equality in recruitment and career progression, integration of gender dimension into research and teaching content, and measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

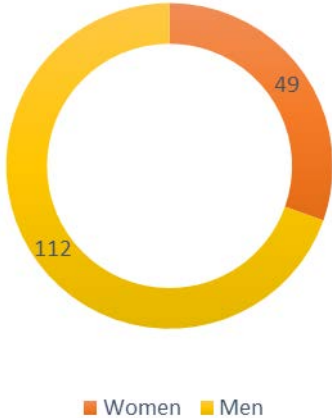
3.1 Gendered Data

This section is a summary of the currently available statistical data on the staff of BIRA-IASB. Only the male-female binary was considered due to the nature of the available data, which is based on the official records and thus the gender identified on the staff members' citizen ID. However, we are aware that gender is not a binary and it is part of our future goals to include data collection taking this into account, reported gender including multiple identities that may exist within the Institute, and how this may affect work life.

Furthermore, at the time of the compilation of this section, only the data for the years up until 2020 were available, and the choice was made to describe the state of play for December 2020.

3.1.1 Whole staff

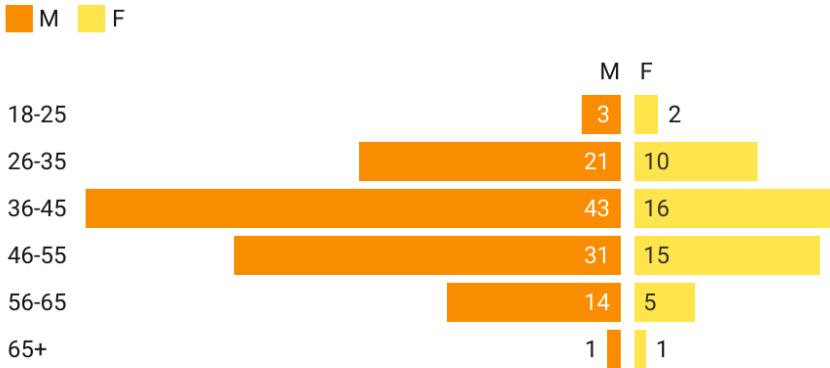
2020



The total workforce of the Institute as recorded in december 2020 consisted of 30% women.

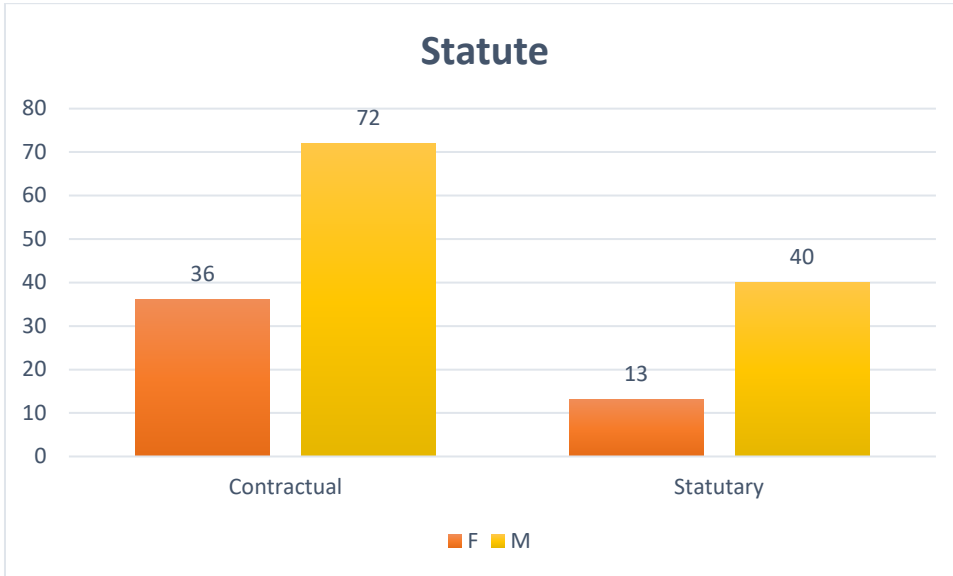
3.1.2 Age

Age by gender



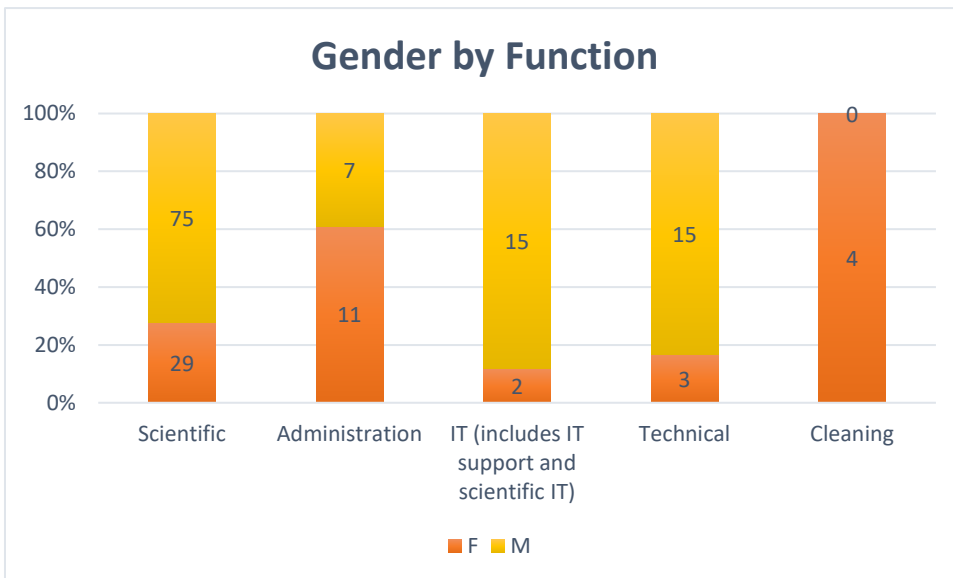
Source: BIRA-IASB • Created with Datawrapper

3.1.3 Statute



At the end of 2020, 33% of the total workforce was statutory. The graph shows that 75% of statutory personnel were men and 25% were women, which deviates from the 30-70 ratio baseline. From a different perspective, 27% of all women are statutory while 36% of all men possess that statute.

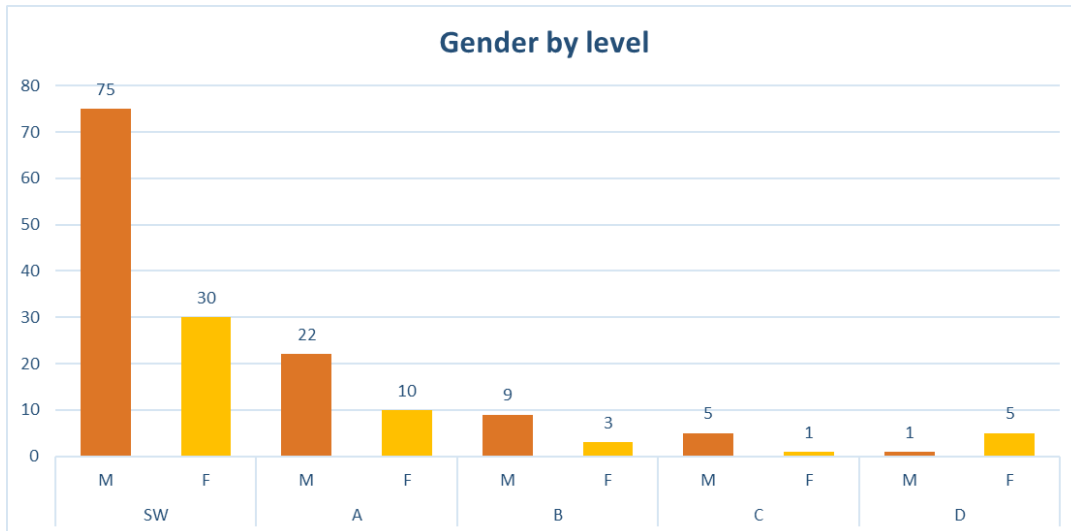
3.1.4 Function



This graph shows the gender distribution among different types of staff at BIRA-IASB as recorded in December 2020. The scientific staff - which accounts for 65% of all personnel - retains the 30-70 ratio baseline. A distinct gender gap can however be seen in all other functions. Women are in the majority in the administrative support staff, and men are entirely absent on the cleaning staff. In the scientific personnel, and even more in the IT staff, which includes IT support and scientific IT personnel, and technical staff, men are in large majority.

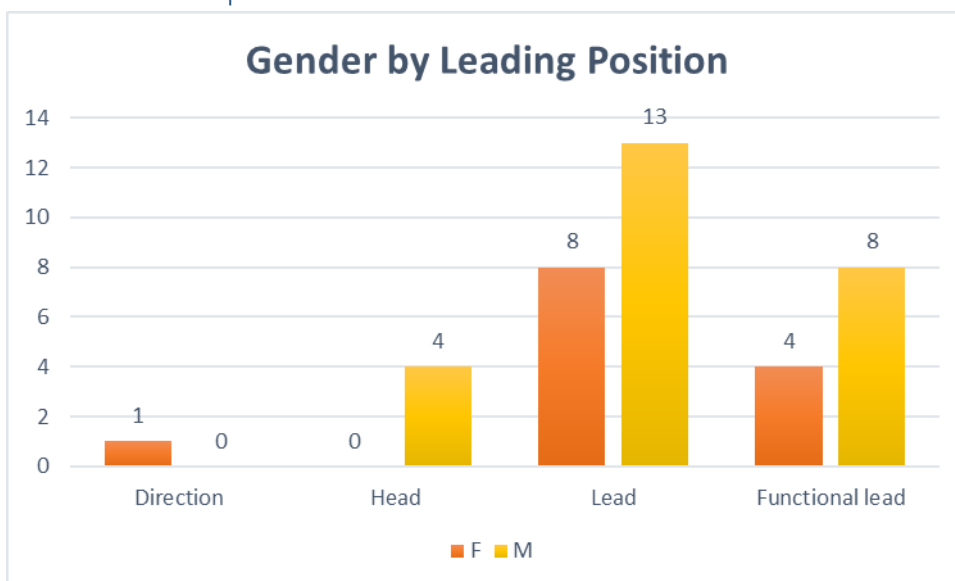
It should be noted that due to the small size of the support personnel, some of the percentages can easily be skewed.

3.1.5 Gender by level



In this figure, personnel is divided by gender and level. Five different levels and types of education and/or training are in use at BIRA-IASB. In broad lines, SW refers to the scientific master and doctorate, A refers to a master level, B to a bachelor level, C to a high school level and D is below high school level.

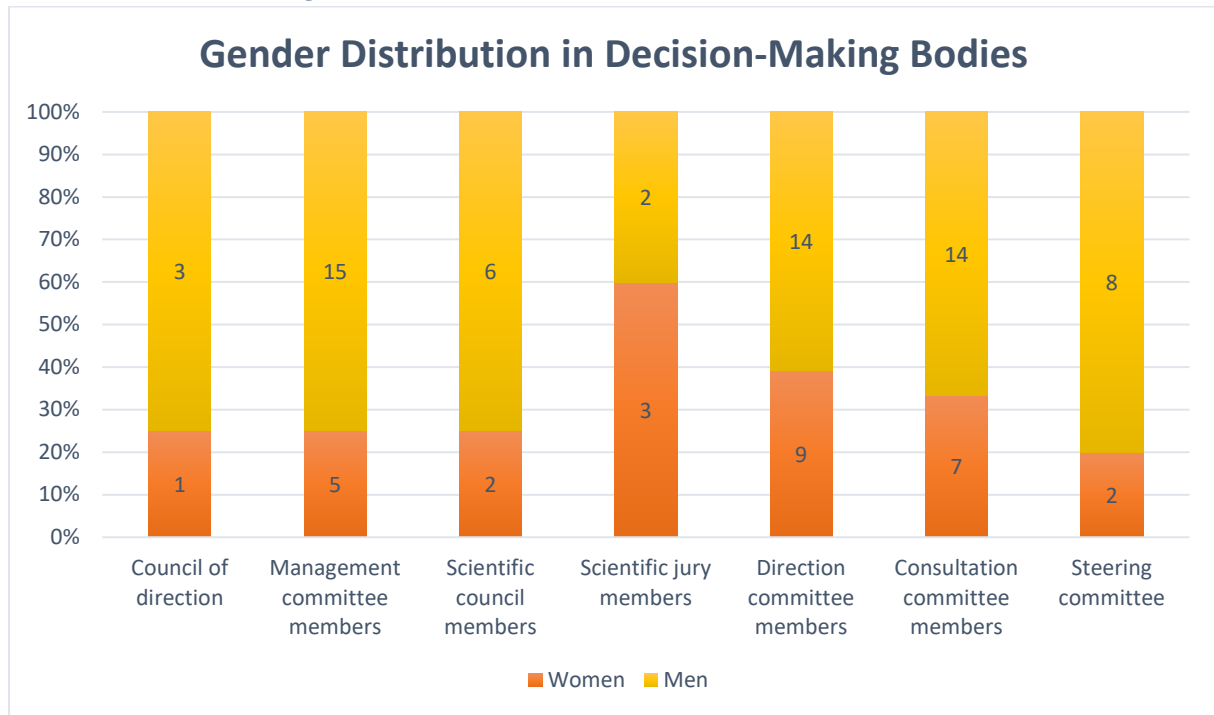
3.1.6 Leadership



In 2020, 68% of personnel in a leading position were men, following the general gender distribution at BIRA-IASB of 70-30 (25 men and 12 women). The title of “Head” signifies that one is leading one of the four scientific *departments* that exist at the institute, named D10, D20, D30 and D40. The title of “Lead” means that one is leading one of the *groups* into which the departments are subdivided, named D11, D12, D21 etc. These include research groups and the support staff groups as well, for example, engineering or administration. The “Functional leads” are the members of staff who have a supervising role within the groups. They have additional leading responsibilities and act as evaluators for the team members under their care.

From the available data, we remark that: 16% of all staff were men in leading positions while 7% of all staff were women holding a position of leadership. Per gender category, 22% of men (25 out of 112 men), and 27% women (13 out of 49) have a leading function.

3.1.7 Decision-making bodies⁹



Decision-making bodies are a crucial level for an organisation to reach a better gender balance, because it promotes and increases the visibility of role models indispensable to raise awareness, and to encourage discriminated populations to engage in careers where they are poorly represented. It is also one of the career stages where the organisation can exert leverage to counteract the well-known “gender leaky pipeline”¹⁰ characterizing the usual evolution of the scientific career.

The graph above represents the gender distribution within the various decision-making bodies in charge of the Institute in 2020¹¹. Some of these bodies (Scientific council, Scientific jury and Consultation committee) are advisory bodies, the other ones are decisional bodies. While the Council of direction is only composed of members of the BIRA-IASB staff, the other decision-making bodies investigated in the figure here above include both members of BIRA-IASB staff and *external* people who are part of the Belgian Science Policy (BELSPO), or staff from other Scientific Institutions. Therefore, the purpose of this graph is to be a record of the gender distribution in decision-making processes, to be used as diagnostic parameter to identify any positive change in the future. These statistics will only be considered as a possible indicator for the Institute to the extent that the institute can influence their composition (e.g., composition of bodies under full control of BIRA-IASB,

⁹ The Steering Committee has become obsolete since 1/1/2023.

¹⁰ See for instance <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/worldwide/japan/status-update-gender-equality-research-careers-europe-she-figures-2018>

¹¹ These data are published on the intranet of the institution; In French: <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/fr/organisation/questions-de-gestion/organigramme>; in Dutch: <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/nl/organisatie/directiezaken/organigram>

or BIRA-IASB contribution to (the improvement of) gender balance in bodies with partial control of BIRA-IASB).

3.1.8 Identified data gaps

Being in possession of accurate data consisting of various key parameters is of main importance to correctly assess the situation and progresses made on gender aspects at BIRA-IASB. During the analysis of the currently available data, we noticed that we are missing important parameters that are necessary to address certain themes of the present GEP.

For the following years, we aim to maintain a continuous record of above-mentioned data (total staff, age, statute, function, leadership, and decision-making bodies) and to begin the collection of gendered data for the following possible indicators:

Publications: number of publications in which a person was a first author

Recruitment: providing an overview of the gender distribution of newly recruited personnel, across all functions and departments. Collecting data on the gender of people who applied for a certain job opening.

Seminar speakers: a gendered record of the speakers for internal BIRA-IASB seminars, reflecting the relative visibility of people with respect to their gender.

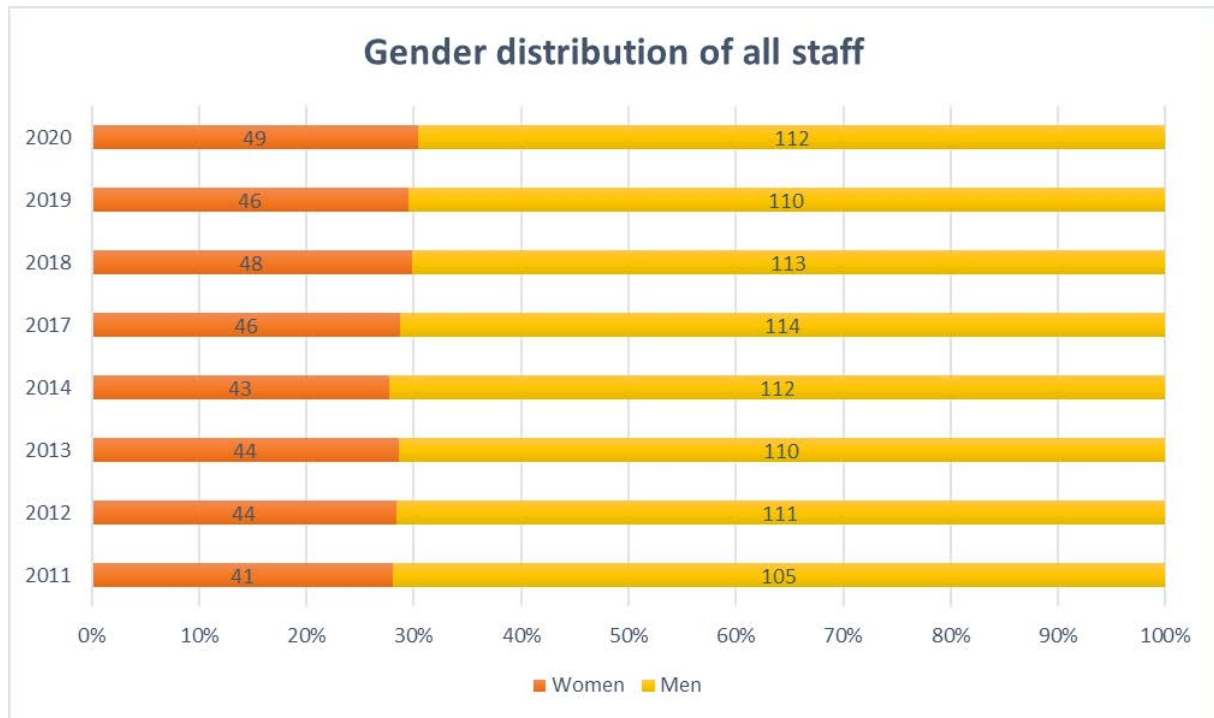
Candidates for recruitment: providing an overview of the gender distribution of the pool of candidates for staff positions

Promotions: in order to form a long-term picture of differences in career progression between men and women in scientific, administrative and technical careers, we need to gather data on the rate at which women vs men are promoted/submit requests for promotion.

Parental leave and part-time work: as an aid to gauge the overall work-life balance upheld by BIRA-IASB employees, as well as possible differences between genders.

Gender distribution within departments and groups: to raise awareness on which fields and functions are lacking in gender diversity

3.2 Evolution over the 10 last years



Over the past ten years, the percentage of women in the total workforce of the Institute has remained stable between 28-30%.

3.3 Existing measures

BIRA-IASB is a Federal Scientific Institute (FSI) and thus follows all measures endorsed by the Belgian Federal Government. An overview of the relevant laws has been proposed in §2, Legislation and are further detailed in Appendix A, and the website of the Federal authority¹² widely documents the existing measures applicable for the Federal administration BIRA-IASB is part of. Specific measures for BIRA-IASB can be found on the intranet and in the internal labour regulations (Règlement de travail¹³ / arbeidsreglement¹⁴). A detailed list of all existing measures is beyond the scope of the present document. In this chapter we will briefly list the main measures from the Belgian Federal Government, with a special focus on the measures that BIRA-IASB specifically added internally (via the work regulations, service notes and other official documents) as applicable at the time of publication of the first version of this Gender Equality Plan (end of the year 2022). **For the latest version of the existing measures internal to BIRA-IASB, please consult the BIRA-IASB intranet relative to the internal labour regulations¹⁵ and to the integrity aspects¹⁶.** We refer to the more complete sources cited above for more details.

¹² See for instance the aspects of well-being: in French: https://fedweb.belgium.be/fr/bien_etre ; in Dutch: <https://fedweb.belgium.be/nl/welzijn>

¹³ <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/fr/organisation/questions-de-gestion/reglement-de-travail>

¹⁴ <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/nl/organisatie/directiezaken/arbeidsreglement>

¹⁵ In French: <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/fr/organisation/questions-de-gestion/reglement-de-travail>; in Dutch: <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/nl/organisatie/directiezaken/arbeidsreglement>

¹⁶ In French: <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/fr/organisation/questions-de-gestion/integriteit>; in Dutch: <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/nl/organisatie/directiezaken/integriteit>

3.3.1 Work-life balance and organizational culture

Specific types of leave

Several measures are active in regard to work-life balance. Many of those measures address the right of employees to take a certain amount of leave in specific situations.

BIRA-IASB follows the Federal Government rules regarding these specific types of leave. A non-exhaustive list of these types of leave are: pregnancy/birth leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, career breaks (for parental leave), adoption leave, foster care leave, foster parent leave, 4-day working week, etc. We will not be discussing all rules and provisions of these types of leave and refer to official documents and fedweb.be¹⁷ for detailed information.

Breast feeding breaks and facilities

As required by Belgian law, BIRA-IASB gives the right to people to take breastfeeding breaks (30mins each day if the workday is 4 hours or more, 2 times 30 min if the workday is 7,5 hours or more). There is also a room available for these breast-feeding breaks.

Childcare facilities

During summer months (July/August) BIRA-IASB organizes childcare facilities (together with the two other institutes on the Space Pole) for their employees.

Telework

The rules regarding telework (working from home) is that the Council of Direction decides whether telework is possible and thus accepted in the organisation. Telework is accepted in the institute, and the functional or hierarchical supervisor of the staff member decides whether he/she gets the permission to do telework. Two types of telework are proposed to employees whose responsibilities make possible to work from home: structural teleworking days, and occasional teleworking days. The exact modalities and conditions are detailed in the internal labour regulations.

Flexible hours

Following the federal rule, BIRA-IASB makes use of a work organisation with an average of 38 hours each week over 4 months. Every 24 hours, a person is entitled to have at least 11 hours of 'rest'. There is a maximum of 50 worked hours a week, and a daily maximum of 11 hours.

3.3.2 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

The federal law adopted on 12 January 2007 specifies that the federal administration is required to integrate gender dimension in its management and working. A gradual increase has occurred in the number of women occupying leading positions during the last years. In 2020, a proportion of 32% of women was observed for the ensemble of the leading positions. This is slightly more favourable for women than the overall gender ratio for the total workforce (29% of women in 2020).

3.3.3 Gender Equality in recruitment and career progression

RECRUITMENT

¹⁷ In French: https://fedweb.belgium.be/fr/conge_absences_et_temps_de_travail; in Dutch: https://fedweb.belgium.be/nl/verlof_afwezigheid_en_werktijd

The process and thus the rules and measures regarding recruitment for BIRA-IASB staff members depend on the career they are in. BIRA-IASB staff members are divided between two kinds of careers: administrative and scientific. Depending on their function/job description and their experience/degree, an employee falls into one of these categories.

The administrative career mainly concerns the staff members working in one of the supporting services of BIRA-IASB or staff members not assigned to scientific research or services. People in the scientific career are people who do scientific research or provide scientific services.

For the **administrative career**, we are bound to use SELOR¹⁸ for our recruitments (there are certain exceptions, like the ‘startbaanovereenkomst’ / ‘convention premier emploi’, for which the recruitment process is similar to the one for the ‘scientific staff’). This means that the recruitment process for administrative staff is to large extent out of our hands. The agents responsible for conducting SELOR recruitment procedures and setting up juries for the selection need to follow a diversity-discrimination training. SELOR has a diversity policy, which can be found in detail on their website¹⁹, where the high importance paid to gender equality in SELOR policy is emphasised. The following starting points to promote gender equality are given:

- Stimulating equal access to selections;
- Gender neutral recruitment adverts: no jobs specific for one gender, mentioning M/F/X;
- Gender equality in the jury of the selection;
- Actively screening new test methods on gender neutrality;
- Researching possible effects of gender on results during oral selections and selections of management positions;
- Communication: communication via specific channels like mailings to reach the necessary target groups;
- Integrating gender neutrality in a standard cv for management jobs (for example: valorising half-time employment in the same way as full-time employment).

For pregnant women or women who are breastfeeding, certain adaptations are foreseen²⁰ in order to enable them to participate in interviews or tests.

To work on the underrepresentation of women in management positions, SELOR has organised ‘top skills’ since 2008. This initiative aims to incite women to apply for top-management positions at the federal government. Currently, according to SELOR, only 1 out of 4 managers within the federal government is a woman.

For **scientific staff**, the recruitment is done “in-house” and we are not bound to SELOR. The recruitment is based on excellence as main selection criteria. The recruiting team (head) has most of the responsibility during the recruitment process (with the support of the HR department). Currently, no specific measures exist with respect to gender equality. There are

¹⁸ <https://www.selor.be>

¹⁹ in Dutch: <https://www.selor.be/nl/gelijke-kansen/vrouwen-en-mannen/>; in French: <https://www.selor.be/fr/égalité-des-chances/égalité-des-chances-pour-les-femmes,-les-hommes-et-toutes-les-égalités-de-genre/>

²⁰ See same page on SELOR’s equal chances (gelijke kansen / égalité des chances)

no internal BIRA-IASB ‘official rules’ nor recommendations regarding the job postings, selection procedure and interviews promoting gender equality at the moment, beyond the general non-discrimination attitude required of every citizen. However, as for SELOR, BIRA is compliant with legal obligations to care for “gender neutral recruitment adverts”, i.e., without specification of any gender pre-requisites, and mentioning that all jobs are open to “M/F/X”. BIRA-IASB seeks communicating job opportunities via specific channels like mailing lists to reach, as well as possible, the necessary target groups.

CAREER PROGRESSION

Career progression is also linked to the category of the staff member. In general, both categories are bound to the system set by the Federal Government for its staff members.

For **administrative staff** the progression of the career is bound to strict rules and requirements. We refer to the information found on Fedweb for details²¹. In general, the staff is divided in categories: level A, B, C and D. Within each subcategory, there are sublevels. Growing from one sublevel to another and possibly from one category to another is bound to the result of yearly evaluations, test, degrees etc., but also to SELOR’s strong constraints which are different for contractual and statutory personnel. As federal organizations, both SELOR and BIRA-IASB have to respect the same gender-mainstreaming and non-discrimination laws imposed by the federal legislation.

For **scientific staff** there are 5 categories: SW10 – SW11 – SW2 – SW3 – SW4, with some sublevels. Information concerning the scientific career is available on the intranet²². The career progression in the research career (group I, “exact sciences”) is controlled by a matrix evaluating the achievements of the staff member in four different areas including publications, participation to / lead of scientific projects, participation to the scientific community (as expert or through communications in congresses, etc.), and knowledge transfer as team leads or toward students. For the scientific public service career (group II), a similar method is used, based on a matrix evaluating achievements in four areas as well, covering the publication of scientific services, the participation to / lead of scientific service projects, provision of scientific services to the community and knowledge transfer about scientific services, and specific output of scientific services. The formulation of the matrix criteria in itself is gender-neutral, meaning that mechanisms possibly contributing to the so-called “gender leaky pipeline”, if existing, should be found in other aspects of the career progression and of the promotion procedures.

No regulation mechanism for gender equality (e.g., “gender quota”) is used, unlike what is done in terms of language (use of possibly implicit mechanisms seeking parity between French-speaking and Dutch-speaking personnel).

3.3.4 Integration of gender dimension into research and teaching content

Although exact sciences seem at first sight to be gender-neutral, many implicit gender biases are present in their implementation in terms of research and teaching. They can express themselves in many aspects of sciences, such as, e.g., the perceived relevance of specific aspects or topics with

²¹ in Dutch: <https://fedweb.belgium.be/nl/loopbaanpad>; in French: https://fedweb.belgium.be/fr/parcours_de_carriere

²² In Dutch: <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/nl/personneelszaken/carriere-salaris/wetenschappelijke-carriere>; in French: <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/fr/ressources-humaines/carriere-remuneration/carriere-scientifique>

societal impact (e.g., perception of the relative importance of simultaneous threads in climate impacts, investigation of causing factors and of resulting impacts, set-up of empiric models, etc.), since such perception can be gender-dependent on average. Also, gender-dependent behaviours are reported concerning preferences in citations of scientific works, invitations of experts as speakers or panellists for scientific happenings, recommendations of experts, invitations to join / lead scientific projects, etc., which lead to significant biases in the evolution of the research advancement and largely affect individual scientific careers in the long-term. In the case of teaching, the lack of role models is another significant source of gender biases inducing a poor image of female and non-binary scientists. No specific internal measures have been identified for the integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content. However, certain programmes/funders do have measures/requirements regarding gender equality: Like for example the BRAIN-be 2.0 programme set-up by Belspo and the requirements by the European Commission for funding. BIRA-IASB does not impose specific measures to promote gender equality in our research and teaching content.

3.3.5 Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

The federal government has a legal framework regarding bullying (in any form, including gender-based violence). By consequence, these laws are also applicable to/at BIRA.

Within the FSI's, there is a network of trust persons. BIRA-IASB currently has 2 trust persons. They are staff members who are trained (and need to follow new trainings regularly) for their mandate of trust person under the management of EMPREVA (the central service of the federal government regarding prevention and protection at work). The names of the trust persons can be found on the intranet²³.

The rules regarding the trust persons and the external service of EMPREVA can be found in article 25 and attachment 7 of our BIRA-IASB work regulations.

Beyond statements in the internal labour regulations about the unacceptable character of all kinds of violence, an appendix²⁴ concerning psycho-social risks was recently added to these regulations. This document includes a statement of principles concerning violence at work, defines violence, sexual harassment and bullying on the work floor and important related concepts, and identifies actors of well-being and possible helping mechanisms, as well as the procedures of lodging of a complaint and the roles expected from all actors in case of infringement.

²³ In Dutch: <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/nl/organisatie/directiezaken/dienstnota/711-2012-08-06-dienstnota-psychosociale-aspecten;>

In French: <https://intranet.aeronomie.be/index.php/fr/prevention/sante/notes-de-service-sur-le-covid-19/712-2012-08-06-dienstnota-psychosociale-aspecten-2>

²⁴ In French: https://intranet.aeronomie.be/ProjectDir/documents/300-career/00000000030_RT_Annexe7_ProcedureAspectsPsychosociales_2022_FR.pdf; in Dutch: https://intranet.aeronomie.be/ProjectDir/documents/300-career/00000000029_AR_Bijlage%207_ProcedurePsychosocialeAspecten_2022_NL.pdf

4 Action plan

After collecting data and reviewing the existing measures, our main conclusion was that we need more quantitative data as well as their variability in time to monitor the situation at our institute. Data providing a reliable view on the general situation, in the environment in which we operate, and also on specific, more individual issues, are both important to identify working points, to decide on future actions and to evaluate whether things are evolving over time.

With this main conclusion in mind, an action plan was set up following five obligatory thematic areas: work-life balance and organizational culture, gender balance in leadership and decision-making, gender equality in recruitment and career progression, integration of gender dimension into research and teaching content, and measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment. A sixth area was added to include more actions with a more general scope.

The different actions contribute to the four mandatory building blocks required by the Horizon Framework Programme concerning the publication and dissemination of the GEP inside and outside the institution, the set-up of dedicated resources for addressing gender-equality issues, the collection and monitoring of sex- or gender-disaggregated data, and training and capacity building to engage the whole staff and tackle gender-biases and gender-based discriminations.

ACTION POINTS GEP VERSION 1

Main acronyms used:

GEP: Gender Equality Plan

G&D: Gender and Diversity

HR: Department of Human Resources

THEMATIC AREA 1: GENERAL

During the summer of 2021, a Gender & Diversity team (G&D team) was created with the main task to set up a first Gender Equality Plan (according to new rules within Horizon Europe of the European Commission) and at a later stage to work on a general Diversity Plan for BIRA-IASB. Although the team has done a lot of work in the last couple of months, with this first GEP as a result, there is still a lot of work to do. We also noticed that many resources and data are still missing in order to help identify issues and set up future actions.

The following action points aim at improving the diversity and secure the long-term operation of the team, to make sure that the concept of gender equality and of Gender and Diversity in general, are embedded in the culture of BIRA-IASB in the future.

OBJECTIVE: Improve the composition and secure the long-term operation of the G&D team. Enhance awareness of gender issues in BIRA-IASB's culture.

ACTION POINT 1.1: Diversify the Gender and Diversity team

The Gender & Diversity Team recognizes the need to be sufficiently diverse to correctly assess possible issues and identify adequate solutions and aims at diversifying the Gender and Diversity team in order to have a better balance in the team composition regarding gender, age, ethnicity, family situation, and any other aspects of diversity in general.

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team
- **Timeline:** before 30/06/2023
- **Indicators: Diversify G&D Team: invite people with different ethnicity, disability, family or private situation, gender, ...**
- **Resources:** G&D Team (time)

ACTION POINT 1.2: Carry out a survey to investigate gender equality aspects at BIRA-IASB (using the GEAM tool)

Following the recommendations of EC experts, a survey will be carried out at the start of every year to investigate the gender equality aspects at the Institute. We intend to use the [Gender Equality Audit and Monitoring \(GEAM\)](#) survey, developed by research teams from the UK (Advance HE) and Spain (Notus and Universitat Oberta de Catalunya) to better understand the specific challenges faced by the institute from the perspective of its employees. Since the GEAM tool provides the possibility to report more individual issues or experiences, this survey complements other types of data collected, for example, from the Human Resources department on the representation of women and men across different staff categories and salary brackets. This action point contributes to the [GEP mandatory requirement](#) of collecting and monitoring data to ensure an evidence-based implementation.

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team, HR
- **Timeline:**
 - o 15/11/2023: first survey published
 - o 31/12/2023: end of the consultation
 - o As soon as possible, and no later than 1/5/2024: results of first survey
- **Indicators:** Survey launched, results/data reported internally
- **Resources:** G&D Team (time), GEAM tool

ACTION POINT 1.3: Provide a G&D Team webpage on intranet

A webpage on the intranet is necessary to make sure that all staff members have access to the information about the G&D team and its plans (GEP, diversity plan,...)

The aim is to add information about gender aspects including the GEP (mandatory), composition and contact details of the Gender & Diversity team, presentation of all gender-relevant aspects. Active publicity will be made about the publication of this information, following different information channels (mailing, website, etc.).

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team / communication
- **Timeline:** 01/02/2023
- **Indicators:** Webpage online. Display of posters in strategic places (e.g., Coffee Corner), information messages sent via mail and posted on the home page of the intranet. Informal and random poll of the staff (at least 5% of the personnel) to check the awareness of the existence of the webpage on intranet.
- **Resources:** G&D Team (time), BIRA-IASB intranet page

ACTION POINT 1.4: Annual reporting of GEP

An annual reporting of the situation and progress in terms of gender equality will be made. This is a mandatory activity, required by the Horizon Europe Framework Programme.

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team
- **Timeline:** By 31/01/2023 a first report on the status of all action points
- **Indicators:** Report on status of all action points of GEP, shared with all staff members via official communication and published on webpage on intranet. Report on the outcome of the survey of the last year, and on possible new observations/evolutions relevant for the GEP.
- **Resources:** G&D Team, Communication

ACTION POINT 1.5: Collection of relevant, more representative data

In general, our main conclusion to the work done to prepare this first GEP was that we do not have enough representative data. This is why the collection of such data is one of our main priorities.

We also want to focus on important aspects of missing data, like for example the fact that non-binary data is missing.

Action point 1.2 takes into account with the fact we miss “soft” data (qualitative; e.g., personal testimony on perceived/experienced situation) which is deemed important for the work on the topic of gender equality. Action point 1.5 focusses on quantitative “hard” data (e.g., statistics over the whole personnel).

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team / HR (other departments if necessary)
- **Timeline:** 31/03/2023
- **Indicators:** In depth evaluation of the existing hard data, report of missing important data and action plan to collect and correctly process this data in the future
- **Resources:** G&D Team / HR

ACTION POINT 1.6: Evaluation of facilities

An evaluation of the existing facilities is necessary to judge whether certain actions are necessary to assure the best possible working environment for all personnel. For example: a breast-feeding room is available, but only one toilet for people with disabilities is available etc.

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team / Facilities
- **Timeline:** 31/03/2023
- **Indicators:** In depth evaluation of the existing facilities, report of missing facilities.
- **Resources:** G&D Team / Facilities

THEMATIC AREA 2: WORK-LIFE BALANCE

BIRA-IASB already has a number of ways of promoting and supporting people in maintaining a healthy work-life balance that suits their needs and their aspirations. The G&D team deems it important that everyone is aware of all the possibilities. These types of leaves should be better advertised to all personnel. Further investigations will be undertaken to identify any areas that possibly need improvement when it comes to work-life balance, like the current rules and impact around missions necessary for work, aspects of the work culture (e.g., e-mails outside of official work hours), etc.

ACTION POINT 2.1: Promote all types of leave for all employees

Some people might have difficulties to find the right information about their rights and possibilities to benefit from specific leave possibilities. This action point aims at better informing all staff members about the existing types of leave and their applicability. It will be emphasized that leave related to family life/kids is not only for women, and that leave possibilities concern various situations (parents with children, care of elderly persons, citizen engagement, etc.).

- **Responsibility:** HR department
- **Timeline:** 30/04/2023
- **Indicators:** E-mail campaign to all personnel
- **Resources:** Time

ACTION POINT 2.2: Raise awareness about the impact of sending emails outside working hours

This action point has a direct link with the law concerning the “right to disconnect” ([Recht op deconnectie](#) / [Droit à la déconnexion](#)) recently adopted by the Belgian Federal Government and added to BIRA-IASB’s labour regulation. Sending e-mails outside official working hours appears to be normalized in

the working culture, even more so since the pandemic and the consistent teleworking. To avoid burn-out and promote a better work-life balance, an information campaign will raise awareness about this normalization, and attempt to counteract the pressure of being available around the clock by emphasizing the necessity of personal (time)boundaries while preserving the possibility to freely organize one's work in a way that most suits the personal situation of everyone.

- **Responsibility:** HR + Unions
- **Timeline:** 31/12/2023
- **Indicators:** [To be considered] seminar/formation/campaign about burn-out
- **Resources:** Time, external experts to present a dedicated seminar, e.g., EMPREVA

THEMATIC AREA 3: LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING

Despite advances during the last years, a closer look is necessary to make sure we know about any inequalities and set up the right measures to improve the situation where necessary. In the end, we want to make sure that the M/F/X ratio in leadership positions is similar to the ratio across BIRA-IASB's population and that the overall situation as to gender equality is satisfactory. The Horizon Europe programme puts a lot of importance on promoting equal chances and opportunities to women and men, which will require the necessary attention in the actions of the G&D Team.

ACTION POINT 3.1: Consultation of the gender and diversity contact person by the decision-making bodies/boards for discussion relevant to gender equality aspects

In order to make sure that the GEP is executed and that gender equality aspects are taken into account in all relevant decisions of the various decision-making bodies, we deem it important to nurture a culture of mutual trust and exchange between the Gender and Diversity Team and decision-making bodies. This should be achieved by consultation of the Gender and Diversity contact person in discussions/meetings pertaining to gender equality and diversity aspects, enabling the contact person to advise/assist the members of the Directors Board, Staff Meeting and Scientists Meeting where it is deemed necessary by those decision-making bodies.

Mutual trust should ensure that board members inform and invite the contact person for relevant discussions, and that the contact person is aware of and respects confidentiality in case any confidential information is discussed, possibly through the use of a non-disclosure agreement.

- **Responsibility:** Decision-making bodies / contact person Gender and Diversity
- **Timeline:** 31/12/2023
- **Indicators:** A report of the invitations of the contact person to relevant meetings/discussions and the topics discussed
- **Resources:** G&D Team

ACTION POINT 3.2: Improve gender balance within the teams

Research has shown that journal articles produced by gender-heterogeneous teams are generally perceived to be higher quality by their peers than the ones produced by teams comprised of highly-performing individuals of the same gender (Campbell et al., 2013). More generally, gender equality has been shown to enhance relevance, excellence and efficiency in research and innovation²⁵.

²⁵ See e.g., the study carried out by the European Commission: "Structural change in research institutions: Enhancing excellence, gender equality and efficiency in research and innovation", 2012, .

BIRA-IASB shows a highly variable situation in terms of gender balance at the level of teams, including both support service teams and research teams. Reasons were not analysed so far, and might be of very different nature depending on the teams; in this analysis, the different sizes of the teams must be taken into account. Therefore, specific actions including at least raising awareness are likely to be needed for each team in order to improve the gender balance. The G&D Team aims at investigating the current gender balance within teams to identify possible actions to take for improving the situation, and in a very first step, raising awareness around it.

Although this action point contributes to the GEP mandatory requirement of supporting the GEP implementation by training and capacity building, the amount of efforts needed for its implementation will result in a staggered process, starting with an awareness raising campaign.

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team
- **Timeline:**
 - o First step: awareness raising: 30/06/2023
 - o Next steps: Later
- **Indicators:** For the first step: material or campaigns to support awareness, like mailing, etc.
- **Resources:** Time; participation per team. External experts to organize a dedicated seminar, e.g., EMPREVA

THEMATIC AREA 4: RECRUITMENT AND CAREER PROGRESSION

Currently, the teams and team leads carry a lot of responsibility and autonomy in the recruitment process of their staff members. Because of this, there is not enough data on whether the recruitment process promotes gender equality. The G&D Team deems it important to see whether any gender equality issues (especially unconscious biases) occur during the recruitment process.

Career progression is mainly regulated by the rules set by the government regarding scientific and administrative personnel.

ACTION POINT 4.1: Prevent implicit biases (including gender biases) in vacancies and hiring procedures

An awareness campaign about implicit/unconscious biases (including gender-related, and other kinds of biases) in vacancies and hiring procedures will be recurrently proposed, including recommendations for a more inclusive writing of job advertisements, the publicity made around job advertisement, the examination and assessment of applications, and the running of interviews. The current procedure for vacancies/hiring will be investigated, and adapted if needed. The aim is to address this aspect as an evolving process that will take into account more aspects of diversity as other issues become clear

during the development and further work of the G&D Team.

- **Responsibility:** HR
- **Timeline:** 31/12/2023
- **Indicators:**
 - o info session by an external expert (for ex. Seminar on unconscious biases)
 - o brochure with guidelines to staff members willing to hire new personnel
 - o evaluation of the current recruitment process
- **Resources:** External experts to present a dedicated seminar

ACTION POINT 4.2: Collect data on gender aspects in hiring

During the last years, an imbalance in the gender repartition has been slow to improve. Although the reason for this is not entirely clear and may originate from many factors, both internal and external to the Institute and at different stages of the career, it is of particular importance to quantify any potential hiring gender gap, in order to identify possible actions and measures to improve the situation. The G&D Team will set up a procedure to systematically collect data on gender aspects in hiring and will investigate possible ways to improve the situation, based on all available data.

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team, HR
- **Timeline:**
 - o Set-up monitoring procedure for gender aspects of hiring (data collection): 31/12/2023
 - o Awareness campaign: 31/04/2024
 - o
- **Indicators:** Brochure with guidelines and checklist to staff members willing to hire new personal; description of a procedure to collect data during the hiring process.
- **Resources:** Time

ACTION POINT 4.3: Provide Gender & Diversity session and/or package for newly hired staff members

An indispensable tool for the promotion of gender equality and the raising of awareness on rights and duties in terms of gender aspects, is to provide adequate information to all staff members, and in particular, to newly hired colleagues. The G&D team will foresee an information session and a package about all relevant information on gender/diversity aspects (including the existence of a GEP, a G&D team, explanations about what is meant by

harassment and gender-based violence, names of the trust persons) in the welcoming procedure for new colleagues. This information will be added to the general procedure and information leaflet for new staff members, and distributed to all current members of the personnel.

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team, HR
- **Timeline:** 30/06/2024
- **Indicators:** Brochure with information about trust persons, GEP, G&D Team
- **Resources:** Time

THEMATIC AREA 5: RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Even if the aspect of gender equality is relevant to the entire staff and recognized as such, BIRA-IASB's core business, namely research, poses specific challenges related to the nature and content of researcher's professional activities, as explained in §3.3.4. Closely related to the research activities are teaching activities that may take on diverse forms, from university courses to the hosting of internships or presentations to school groups from all education levels. The G&D Team acknowledges this specificity by taking specific actions devoted to the promotion of gender equality for all researchers in our Federal Scientific Institute.

ACTION POINT 5.1: Collect data on gender aspects of the submission/selection of proposals

A key activity specific to a research institute is the submission of proposals for research projects, as well as the related activity of selection of research proposals by peers. Research shows that these activities are the occasion of many gender-based discriminations, with a high impact on the career and opportunities of promotion for the discriminated categories, in particular women (Rathbun et al., 2017). It is a main objective of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme to ensure, through the requirement of publishing a Gender Equality Plan as pre-requisite for any grant of research projects, to improve the gender equality in the project submission/selection processes. The G&D Team acknowledges the mandate given by the EC by including gender indicators about the submission/selection of proposals with respect to the gender of the Principal Investigator, and the gender balance amongst work package leads.

This action point contributes to the [GEP mandatory requirement](#) of collecting and monitoring data to ensure an evidence-based implementation.

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team, Programme Management
- **Timeline:** 31/12/2023: First exploration of a methodology
- **Indicators:** First draft of a process chain; set of relevant indicators to be used in the collection of statistical data
- **Resources:** Time

ACTION POINT 5.2: Provide gender and diversity guidelines and mandatory consultation for events

Another key activity for the advancement of the research career is the researcher's visibility, and ability to show and share his/her work with the scientific community. Research has shown that gender stereotypes largely harm opportunities given to female researchers to present their work or to take a prominent role in the organization of the scientific community, e.g., as chairman, speaker in scientific conferences, expert, etc., which has a significant impact on all stages of their career perspectives (Klein et al., 2017, Nittrouer et al., 2018; Schmidt et al., 2017; Schroeder et al., 2013, Davenport et al.,

2014). Hence, action is needed to fight implicit gender biases, gender stereotypes and discrimination, and awareness must be raised to offer equal opportunities to all. This implies the necessity to provide a gender balance in the visibility of researchers in the various scientific events and activities, as role models to inspire a more inclusive working environment in the scientific community.

For diversity in general, it is noticeable that for example events/conferences in the US are a lot more accessible and take into consideration requirements/facilities linked to aspects of diversity. In Europe, in comparison, a lack of awareness remains for certain needs, causing them to be unfulfilled and putting certain groups at a disadvantage.

To facilitate the organization of events up to standard on all diversity and accessibility requirements, we aim to provide clear and easily accessible information regarding said requirements. Therefore, the G&D Team will set up guidelines and a checklist on gender and diversity aspects that need to be followed for the organization of events/symposia/conferences.

Organizers of large events will mandatorily consult the G&D Team for advice and support in addressing gender and diversity aspects, and take their recommendations into account (on a best-effort basis) to promote gender equality and diversity in the whole process, from the preparation to the realisation of the activity itself. For small events (e.g., “on invitation”), organizers are invited to consult the G&D Team’s checklist and guidelines.

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team
- **Timeline:** 31/12/2023: first version of the guidelines
- **Indicators:** Guidelines + checklist on gender and other diversity aspects of the organization of scientific meetings and events. Information notice from the management to inform about the new guidelines and procedures.
- **Resources:** Time

THEMATIC AREA 6: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE INCL. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Gender-based violence and, more generally, all kind of bullying, moral and sexual harassment have a considerable impact on the well-being, health, and career advancement of the victims, often largely underestimated by the perpetrators, and even by colleagues and supervisors. Such kind of problem has been widely denounced in academia, including in Belgium²⁶. The lack of understanding, empathy and support from colleagues can make the situation even worse, increase the feeling of vulnerability and isolation, as well as the lack of recognition and appreciation of the persecuted staff member in a dangerous vicious circle. In such situations, the victim often lacks resources to seek help or look for support, and the problem remains invisible, hidden, or unsaid. This can reinforce the problem and possibly the sense of impunity perceived by both the victim and the perpetrator, and even the actual fact that the perpetrator remains unpunished. The G&D Team will take initiative to improve the possibility of support offered to

²⁶ See, for instance, the Pano report presented on the Flemish public channel VRT on 16 March 2022, “Macht misbruikt” (“Abuse of power”).

victims, to encourage witnesses of gender-based harassment to come forward, to provide guidelines to assist victims and to discourage perpetrators of gender-based harassment, bullying or violence.

ACTION POINT 6.1: Provide information on trust persons

The G&D Team will provide clear and easily accessible information about the name and coordinates of the trust persons (internal and external to the institute, e.g., external social services, EMPREVA), using different information channels (e.g., easily accessible information on intranet, through mailing, on posters in highly frequented places such as the coffee corner, etc.). The efficiency of the information dissemination will be verified through an informal, random poll on at least 5% of the staff over all categories of personnel.

- **Responsibility:** Trust persons
- **Timeline:** 30/04/2023
- **Indicators:** post on the intranet, mailing, poster in the coffee corner and possibly other identified strategic places of messages, newsletter in collaboration with the trust persons
- **Resources:** Communication, time

ACTION POINT 6.2: Training of the personnel, raising awareness of supervisors/team leads AND management/direction

It's important to raise awareness within all staff members regarding gender and any other diversity topics. At first, we would like to focus on training of people who are supervisors/team leads, or any people who are in a management function. Providing information about norms and the identification of behaviors that can be assimilated to bullying, sexual harassment or gender-based violence is a primary measure to prevent and to combat such kinds of abuse. The G&D Team will organize training sessions for all staff members on how to react in situations of bullying/sexual harassment/... and how to react if you see this happening to someone else. Such training will be mandatory at least once per period (to be specified; see Action point 6.3 and 6.4).

This action point contributes to the [GEP mandatory requirement](#) of supporting the GEP implementation by training and capacity building.

- **Responsibility:** G&D Team
- **Timeline:** 30/9/2023 (Coordination with Belspo's network of contact persons gender-equality-handicap-diversity)
- **Indicators:** organization of training sessions on gender-based violence for all staff members
- **Resources:** external expert to give the training sessions (e.g., EMPREVA)

ACTION POINT 6.3: Collect data on the gender ratio of people leaving the institute

Problems of any kind of gender discrimination or of gender-based inadequacy of the working conditions can be reflected in an imbalance in the gender ratio of people leaving the institute. The G&D Team plans to collect data on the gender ratio of people leaving the institute as a proxy for any kind of gender issue.

This action point contributes to the goal of collecting and monitoring data to ensure an evidence-based implementation.

- **Responsibility:** HR
- **Timeline:** 30/09/2023
- **Indicators:** Report and publication of statistics on reasons invoked for leaving the Institute, publication of the gender ratio of people leaving the institute as an indicator in the gender statistics
- **Resources:** Contribution from trust persons, time

ACTION POINT 6.4: Foresee an exit meeting with people who resigned

For a victim of bullying, sexual harassment or gender-based violence, the most radical measure to protect him/herself is to leave the institute. The knowledge of such extreme situations is of critical importance to identify the prejudice caused, to prosecute the perpetrators (a legal obligation of the institution), and to take steps to avoid future harm. Unfortunately, there is no record of the reasons for leaving the institute, and this crucial information is lost, and inaccessible for the prevention and monitoring of bullying, sexual harassment and gender-based violence. The G&D Team will propose the organization of an exit meeting with people who are resigning in order to identify reasons that require attention, particularly, reasons related to bullying, sexual harassment and gender-based violence. This exit meeting is preferably done by HR, so it can be tracked and reported. But of course, every staff member is allowed to decline or ask for a talk with anyone else they trust (like the trust persons for example).

- **Responsibility:** HR
- **Timeline:** 30/9/2023
- **Indicators:** Evaluation of the current situation and proposition of a methodology for the data collection on reasons for leaving
- **Resources:** Time

5 Conclusions, lessons learned and perspectives

The present Gender Equality Plan has been set up by a group of people internal to BIRA-IASB who are not expert in Gender and Diversity aspects. This was a requirement from EC's Horizon Europe framework programme, aiming at increasing awareness and addressing the effective situation encountered inside the institution.

To maximize the chance of success, Horizon Europe imposes four main requirements concerning the publication of the GEP: the allocation of dedicated resources to address and work on gender-equality issues, the collection and monitoring of sex- and gender disaggregated data, and training and capacity building to address gender-equality issues by engaging the whole personnel. The Horizon Europe programme also provides a broad range of supporting documents, initiatives, guidelines and recommendations that were used as basis for the approach followed here. In particular, the different building blocks recommended by EC (make an overview of the existing legislation, analyse the current situation inside the institution, and set up an action plan, including plans for yearly cycles of gender equality monitoring) were closely followed and gave us the necessary tools to explore the existing situation and to propose relevant actions for the future in the different thematic areas prescribed by Horizon Europe: work-life balance, gender balance in leadership, gender equality in recruitment and career, integration of the gender dimension in research and teaching, and measures against gender-based violence.

For the future, the aim is to follow the procedure recommended by Horizon Europe to organize yearly cycles of implementation of the action points, evaluate and monitor the progress by collecting data and update the action plan consequently.

A main next step will be to investigate more closely the diversity aspects that could not be addressed as carefully as we wanted due to the priority given to gender aspects (set-up of a Gender Equality Plan, an EC requirement to be fulfilled when applying for any grant or funding by Horizon Europe from 2022).

This work also showed the huge interest, importance, and necessity to work closely with other actors of the well-being and human aspects at work, both internally (human resources, trust persons, service Safety and Prevention, Unions, etc.) and externally (Belspo, EMPREVA, etc.). Synergies with these actors will be pursued and/or reinforced in the future to further improve the relevance and effectiveness of the objectives of the Gender & Diversity Team and the Gender Equality Plan, and of the Diversity Plan (to be set up).

We hope that this first round will contribute to improve the well-being of the entire staff and the evolution of culture and work structure at BIRA-IASB, and more generally, that it will facilitate the emergence of a scientific world and a science community with more gender equality, diversity and inclusiveness, following the aspirations pursued by many.

6 Acronyms

a.i.	Ad interim
Art.	Article
BELSPO	Belgian Science Policy Office
BIRA	Royal Belgian Institute for Space Aeronomy
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRPD	UN Convention on the Right of Persons with disabilities
DG	Directorate - General
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EC	European Commission
EIC	European Innovation Council
ERA	European Research Area
EU	European Union
F	Female
FP	Framework Programme
FPS	Federal Public Service
FSI	Federal Scientific Institute
GAP	Gender Action Plan
G&D	Gender and diversity
G&DT	Gender and Diversity Team
GE	Gender Equality
GEAM	Gender Equality Audit and Monitoring
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
HR	(Department of) Human Resources
IASB	Institut royal Belge d'Aéronomie Spatiale de Belgique
ILO	International Labour Organization
IT	Information Technology
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer
M	Male
PPS	Public Planning Service
RFO	Research Funding Organisations
RPO	Research Performing Organisations
R&I	Research and Innovation
SELOR	Recruitment Office of the Federal Administration
SG	Secretariat - General
STEM	Sciences, Technologies, Engineering, Mathematics
UN	United Nations

7 Glossary

The definitions below are given by the Council of Europe and EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality) Dictionary.

7.1 Sex

Sex refers to the *biologically determined characteristics* of men and women in terms of reproductive organs and functions based on chromosomal complement and physiology. As such, sex is globally understood as the classification of living things as male and female, although it cannot be fully encapsulated in this binarity.

Source: GE academy DOCC, *Gender Equality Plans in Practice*, <https://qe-academy-docc.eu/lessons/basic-concepts-2/>

7.2 Gender

Gender refers to the *socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes* that a given society considers appropriate for men and women, defining them as femininity and masculinity. It varies in time and place, and between cultures.

Source: GE academy DOCC, *Gender Equality Plans in Practice*, <https://qe-academy-docc.eu/lessons/basic-concepts-2/>

7.3 Gender mainstreaming

Strategy based on the (re)organisation, improvement, development, and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated *in all policies at all levels and stages*, by the actors normally involved in policy-making. This requires to systematically consider the difference between the needs, conditions, experiences of women and men, in any policies, in any action we want to develop. It is thus about a true structural change.

Source: GE academy DOCC, *Gender Equality Plans in Practice*, <https://qe-academy-docc.eu/lessons/basic-concepts-2/>

7.4 Gender equality

Gender equality is defined as a situation where individuals of both sexes are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations imposed by strict gender roles. The different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favored equally. Thus, it indicates the absence of barriers to economic, political and social participation on grounds of sex and gender and other characteristics.

Gender equality does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but rather that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities may not depend on whether we are born male or female.

Source: GE academy DOCC, *Gender Equality Plans in Practice*, <https://qe-academy-docc.eu/lessons/basic-concepts-2/>

7.5 Intersectional gender approach

Social research method in which gender, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation and other social differences (ability, education, race, age, ...) are simultaneously analyzed.

The term intersectionality has become the key analytic framework through which feminist scholars in various fields talk about interlocking systems of power and oppression. This concept was developed by Kimberley Crenshaw. An important aspect is that inequalities are never the result of a single

factor, but the outcome of the intersection of different social power relation experiences, social occasions, etc. It is about a multi-axis of frameworks.

The intersectional approach allows understanding privileges and oppression in all its different forms, and to analyze complex relations between different inequalities at multiple levels.

Source: GE academy DOCC, *Gender Equality Plans in Practice*, <https://ge-academy-docc.eu/lessons/basic-concepts-2/>

8 References

- Campbell LG, Mehtani S, Dozier ME, Rinehart J. (2013) Gender-Heterogeneous Working Groups Produce Higher Quality Science. *PLoS ONE* 8(10): e79147. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0079147
- Clancy, K. B. H., K. M. N. Lee, E. M. Rodgers, and C. Richey (2017), Double jeopardy in astronomy and planetary science: Women of color face greater risks of gendered and racial harassment, *J. Geophys. Res. Planets*, 122, 1610–1623, doi:10.1002/2017JE005256.
- Davenport, J. R. A., Fouesneau, M., Grand, E., Hagen, A., Poppenhaeger, K., & Watkins, L. L. (2014). Studying Gender in Conference Talks -- data from the 223rd meeting of the American Astronomical Society. arXiv. <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2014arXiv1403.3091D>
- Klein, R. S., Voskuhl, R., Segal, B. M., Dittel, B. N., Lane, T. E., Bethea, J. R., Carson, M. J., Colton, C., Rosi, S., Anderson, A., Piccio, L., Goverman, J. M., Benveniste, E. N., Brown, M. A., Tiwari-Woodruff, S. K., Harris, T. H., & Cross, A. H. (2017). Speaking out about gender imbalance in invited speakers improves diversity. *Nature Immunology*, 18(5), 475-478. <https://doi.org/10.1038/ni.3707>
- Nittrouer, C. L., Hebl, M. R., Ashburn-Nardo, L., Trump-Steele, R. C. E., Lane, D. M., and Valian, V. (2018) Gender disparities in colloquium speakers at top universities, *PNAS*, 2018, vol. 115, issue 1, 104-108, <http://www.pnas.org/content/115/1/104.full>
- Rathbun, J. (2017), Participation of women in spacecraft science teams, *Nature Astronomy* 1(6):0148, doi: 10.1038/s41550-017-0148
- Schimdt, S. J., and Davenport, J. R. A. (2017) Who asks questions at astronomy meetings?, *Nature Astronomy*, 1, 0153, doi: 10.1038/s41550-017-0153
- Schroeder, J., Dugdale, H. L., Radersma, R., Hinsch, M, Buehler, D. M., et al., (2013), Fewer invited talks by women in evolutionary biology symposia, *J. Evol. Biol.* 26, 2063-2069, doi:10.1111/jeb.12198.

9 Appendix A: Overview of the International, European and Belgian legislation relevant for gender aspects

Many legislative tools have been set up at different levels (e.g. UN, European and Belgian levels) to promote gender equality and the fight against gender-based discriminations and violence. An overview of all these tools is proposed below, aiming at giving, as much as possible, a complete and focussed insight into tools available for the current purpose, and as accurately described as we can with our eyes of non-experts. *Parts in italic* reproduce excerpts of legal texts or of cited references. **Parts in bold** are part of the analysis made by the Gender & Diversity team, and seeks the highlight of aspects specifically of interest for the purpose of this gender action plan.

9.1 Legislation at international level

9.1.1 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The founding text of the Universal Declaration of Human Right²⁷ was proclaimed on 10 December 1948. It states in its Article 1 that “*all human beings are born free and **equal in dignity and rights***”, and in its Article 2 that “*everyone is **entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status***”. Article 7 says that “*all are **equal before the law** and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to **equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.***” Article 27 ensures that “*everyone, without any discrimination, has the **right to equal pay for equal work***”.

9.1.2 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

The CEDAW²⁸ was adopted on 18 December 1979 by the UN General Assembly, and came into force on 3 September 1981 after ratification by 20 countries. Belgium has been signed and ratified CEDAW.

The convention is structure in six parts with 30 articles in total. Its preamble recalls “*that **discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and **makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity*****”. It emphasize “*that the eradication of apartheid, all forms of racism, racial discrimination, colonialism, neo-colonialism, aggression, foreign occupation and domination and interference in the internal affairs of States is essential to the full enjoyment of the rights of men and women*”, announcing already the concept of intersectionality. Finally, it expresses the conviction that “*the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require **the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields.***”

²⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

²⁸ The text of the convention can be found on the following link:

<https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/cedaw%20EN.pdf>.

Related to the “*social significance of maternity and the role of both parents in the family and in the upbringing of children*”, the convention express the awareness that “**the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination**” and “*that the upbringing of children requires a sharing of responsibility between men and women and society as a whole*”.

With respect to the fact that our Institute hosts students and doctoral students, Art. 10 , stipulating that “*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women*”, is of interest for BIR-IASB. Amongst others, these measures include, “*on a basis of equality of men and women*”, “**the same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas**”, and “**the same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants**” .

Art. 11 specifies that *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular (...) the right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings*, (...) **the right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment**”, and “*The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work*”. Also specific protections against discrimination on the ground on pregnancy, maternity, and maternity leave are included.

9.1.3 International Labour Organization (ILO)’s Violence and Harassment Convention

ILO’s Convention C190 “Violence and Harassment Convention”²⁹ was established in 2019 and entered into force on 25 June 2021. It aims at the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work by recognizing the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment. This convention has been supplemented by the Violence and Harassment Recommendation R206³⁰.

Since Convention C190 has *not been ratified yet by Belgium*, and will not be further described here.

9.2 Legislation at European level

9.2.1 Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union

The Charter of Fundamental rights of the European Union has been published on 18 December 2000 in the Official Journal of the European Communities. While it is a general text about fundamental human rights, several articles are specifically relevant for gender equality in the present context. Article 23 “Equality between men and women”, is the most relevant article in the context of this GEP, ensuring that “**equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay**”. Interestingly, it specifies that “*the principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the*

²⁹ The text of the convention is available on:

https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190

³⁰ See link:

https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R206

under-represented sex”, recognizing the right to use of affirmative action measures such as e.g., quota with the goal to promote gender equality.

Further, Article 3 “*Right to the integrity of the person*” mentions that “*everyone has **the right to respect for his or her physical and mental integrity***”, what could be evoked in cases of gender-based violence and harassment.

Article 13 “*Freedom of the arts and sciences*”, proclaims the respect of academic freedom and says that “*the arts and scientific research shall be free of constraint*”. Article 20 proclaims everyone’s “*Equality before the law*” and Article 21 “*Non-discrimination*” prohibits “*any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation*”, providing useful elements for an intersectional approach.

Finally, Article 31 “*Fair and just working conditions*”, mentions that “*Every worker has the right to working conditions which respect his or her health, safety and dignity*”, and can be evoked in case of sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

Different directives were adopted by the European Parliament and the Council for the application of the Charter, and recast afterward into the Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the *implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)*³¹, taking into account different decisions of the Court of Justice.

9.2.2 European Charter and Code for Researchers

The European Charter for Researchers³² is a set of general principles and requirements which specifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/or funders of researchers. The aim of the Charter is to ensure that the nature of the relationship between researchers and employers or funders is conducive to successful performance in generating, transferring, sharing and disseminating knowledge and technological development, and to the career development of researchers.

Of particular interest in the present context are the following sections:

9.2.2.1 Non-discrimination

Employers and/or funders of researchers will not discriminate against researchers in any way on the basis of gender, age, ethnic, national or social origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, disability, political opinion, social or economic condition.

9.2.2.2 Working conditions

Employers and/or funders should ensure that the working conditions for researchers, including for disabled researchers, provide where appropriate the flexibility deemed essential for successful research performance in accordance with existing national legislation and with national or sectoral collective-bargaining agreements. They should aim to provide working conditions which **allow both women and men researchers to combine family and work, children and career.** Particular attention should be paid, inter alia, to **flexible working hours,**

³¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32006L0054>

³² <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter-code-researchers>

part-time working, tele-working and sabbatical leave, as well as to the necessary financial and administrative provisions governing such arrangements.

9.2.2.3 Funding and salaries

Employers and/or funders of researchers should ensure that researchers **enjoy fair and attractive conditions of funding and/or salaries with adequate and equitable social security provisions** (including sickness and parental benefits, pension rights and unemployment benefits) in accordance with existing national legislation and with national or sectoral collective bargaining agreements. This must include **researchers at all career stages including early-stage researchers**, commensurate with their legal status, performance and level of qualifications and/or responsibilities.

9.2.2.4 Gender balance

Employers and/or funders should aim for a **representative gender balance at all levels of staff, including at supervisory and managerial level**. This should be achieved on the basis of an **equal opportunity policy at recruitment and at the subsequent career stages** without, however, taking precedence over quality and competence criteria. To ensure equal treatment, **selection and evaluation committees** should have an **adequate gender balance**.

The European Charter and Code principles for Research was endorsed by at least than 1309 organisations (this number is rapidly growing), including BELSPO³³: *“The Board of Directors of the Belgian Federal Science Policy decided in its meeting of 1st July 2011 to support the initiative of the European Commission Recommendation of 11 March 2005, and to endorse the general principles and requirements known as ‘The European Charter for Researcher and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers’”*.

BIRA-IASB is thus explicitly and expressly committed to respect the European Charter for Researcher and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers.

9.2.3 The Istanbul Convention (11 May 2011)

The Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention is a human rights treaty to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. It has been signed by all EU Member States.

What the Istanbul Convention says :

- The state has a responsibility to **prevent all forms of violence against women, protect those who experience it and prosecute perpetrators**.
- The state must **promote equality between women and men** and prevent violence against women by **encouraging mutual respect or non-violent conflict resolution** and **questioning gender stereotypes** – including through teaching materials in schools.
- The state must **investigate** allegations of violence and **prosecute perpetrators**.
- The state must **protect and support** those who experience violence, for example by removing perpetrators from the house to make sure the person affected stays safe and by offering sufficient and accessible shelters.

³³ https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/cc-declarations/be_belspo.pdf

- The state must ensure that victims **can claim compensation** from the offender and must award adequate compensation itself if it cannot be covered from other sources.
- Those who experience violence should have **information** and **access to support services** (...).

It is interesting to note that in this text, it is the perpetrator who has to be “removed” from the field where violence takes place, and not the victim.

9.2.4 EU Framework programmes and related policies

EU’s legal and policy framework for gender equality in research and innovation (R&I) relies on a broad large of tools. The general framework on gender equalities includes EU treaties, gender equality directives and EU’s gender equality strategy. More specifically for the R&I aspects, it relies on the *European Research Area (ERA) Roadmap*³⁴, the successive EU framework programmes for R&I up to Horizon Europe, and specific Councils’ resolutions, communications, and resolutions from the European Parliament.

Gender Equality has a long history in the ERA, where it became a priority in 2012, with the establishment of 3 objectives to work with Member States on, in order to **foster institutional and cultural changes** in the framework of:

- **Gender equality in scientific careers**
- **Gender balance in decision-making**
- **Integration of the gender dimension in the content of R&I.**

During all this history, EU forced a whole evolution in terms of the implementation and policy with respect to R&I, developing an approach with 3 successive steps to address gender equality aspects, which can be summarized as:

1. **Fixing the number of women:** in 1999, the *Communication on women in science* introduces the objective of increasing women’s participation to R&I
2. **Fixing the organizations:** In 2007, the 7th Framework Programme (FP) brings structural and cultural changes in academia and research organizations to address barriers in gender equality. This is a major change acknowledging the existence of a structural problem with respect to gender equality.
3. **Fixing the knowledge:** This last step starts from the recognition that also knowledge is gendered, and imposes integrating, in a first step, a gender-based analysis in the content of research, and later, in today’s requirement to include the gender dimension in all aspects and in the whole research cycle including literature review, methodologies, implementation, and dissemination all research content.

From FP7 and through the FPs Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, gender equality is a cross-cutting principle of the FPs. Applicants are asked to integrate a gender dimension in the content of their research, which is a very new concept. Gender balance among research teams is effectively taken into account for the selection of equally ranked proposals, and gender balance is required in evaluation panels and in other relevant advisory bodies, such as boards and expert groups. Very recently, EU started providing support to the implementation of gender equality plans (GEPs) in research performing organisations (RPOs) including universities, and research funding organisations (RFOs).

³⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/our-digital-future/era_en

9.2.4.1 The evolution of European legislation through the EU framework and policies

From FP4, the aspects of “fixing the number of women” becomes an attention point and the 1999 “Communication on Women in Science” stands as a wake-up call: women are not participating to research European FPs. The spirit of the changes leading to today’s situation in Horizon Europe is already included in this Communication: “[Promoting the participation of women in science] *must take place at several levels; the aim is to promote research **by, for and on women***”.

For the first time, the gender aspects are analyzed and documented very well, identifying different problems: a **lack of women in R&I**, and the existence of **horizontal segregation**, meaning that women are concentrating in specific kinds of activities. More specifically, women are particularly scarce in Sciences, Technologies, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The start of the publication of “*She Figures*”³⁵ in 2003 is an important achievement if the documentation of gender equality issues.

In 2007, the Conference “*Gender issues in Research*” organized in Berlin under the impulse of the German Presidency is an important milestone. 2007 marks the start of FP7, in which many projects are funded on gender equality aspects. EC’s strategy moves from “fixing the number of women” to “fixing the organizations”.

Building upon these developments, the Horizon 2020 framework programme (2007-2013) foresees funding dedicated to capacity building, with several projects such as the “GE Academy” that recently proposed an online course on “GEPs in practice”. This capacity building lays the groundwork for the implementation of the European strategy in terms of gender equality, which are fully realized in the last Horizon Europe framework programme.

U. von der Leyen’s priority of fostering a “*Union of Equality*” is expressed through the Gender-balanced College of Commissioners, a target fixed of obtaining 50% women managers at all levels by 2024 and by the set-up of the Female Talent Development Programme. A **Commissioner for Equality** (Helena Dalli) is added to the College of Commissioners, and a Task Force for Equality is created, including the Secretariat in the General-Secretariat (SG) and Equality Coordinators in each Directorate-General (DG). On 5 March 2020, a *communication on ‘A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025’*³⁶ is published where gender equality in R&I and Horizon Europe is explicitly addressed, and new measures announced, including:

- The possibility to **require a gender equality plan from applicants**
- Initiatives to increase the number of women-led technology start-ups (EIC)
- Funding for gender and intersectional research will also be made available

Five additional strategies are adopted:

- The EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025 (18/09/2020)
- The EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation (07/10/2020)

³⁵ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/61564e1f-d55e-11eb-895a-01aa75ed71a1>

³⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

- The LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 (12/11/2020)
- The Gender Action Plan III – a priority of EU external action (25/11/2020)
- The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 (03/03/2021)

constituting a useful basis for an intersectional approach of gender aspects. A legislative initiative on gender-based violence is also in preparation.

In 2021, EU committed itself to develop concrete plans with Member States to **promote gender equality, diversity and inclusiveness in science, research and innovation** in this latest FP. The **mandatory rule of setting up a GEP** is very much in line with the aspect “fixing the organizations”, superseding the approach of “fixing the number of women”: all approaches have to be considered simultaneously.

There is a great variation possible in the implementation of GEPs, each putting more or less accent on the 3 approaches, but **all three approaches (fixing the number of women, fixing the institutions, and fixing the knowledge) are important and have to be considered.**

9.2.4.2 Gender dimension in FP7 (2007): From “fixing women” to “fixing organizations”

Recognizing the structural problem of a lack of women in European R&I, The European Commission (EC)’s focus moves from the aspects of fixing the number of women in R&I to “fixing the organizations”. Gender aspects are considered as a **priority** by the German Presidency starting in 2007, and EC establishes for the first time a very significant, specific funding to support projects promoting **structural changes in scientific organizations** through the **design and implementation of GEPs**. This change of focus is also reflected in the inclusion, in 2012, of gender equality as a priority in the ERA, where research organizations and Higher Education institutions are invited to implement **institutional changes relating to HR management, funding, decision-making and research programmes.**

9.2.4.3 Gender dimension of Horizon Europe: From “fixing women” to “fixing the knowledge”

With the Horizon Europe framework programme³⁷, EC adopts a “*gender+*” approach, broadening gender equality policies in R&I to intersect the already **addressed aspect of gender inequalities with other potential grounds for discrimination**³⁸. Specific funds are allocated to gender and **intersectional research**, in order to explore the interaction of gender aspects with other grounds or inequalities on the basis of, e.g. ability, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, etc.

As the last objective of the ERA, the **integration of the gender dimension in R&I contents** becomes a **requirement by default** across the whole Horizon Europe framework programme. This is a major change at European level, while addressing the gender dimension is recommended in FP7 and Horizon 2020, it becomes mandatory and a **condition for granting projects** through the whole Horizon Europe framework programme. Consequently, and for the first time, **all public bodies, research organizations and higher education establishments are required to have a GEP in place to get access to Horizon Europe funding.** The GEP set up by each organization has to be **signed by the Direction, made public through the website of the organization.** This objective is very ambitious and is

³⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/695/oj>

³⁸ <https://horizoneurope.ie/news/horizon-europe-gender-equality>

aimed as a true **culture change within the enterprise**. A lot of work is still to be done, and developing and implementing the present GEP is a part of it.

A specific focus is also laid on “widening countries” (i.e. countries in Central and Eastern Europe having less tradition in gender equality values) to have more participation of these countries in actions dedicated to gender equality in R&I organization (i.e. more institutions with GEPs). The aim is to have more homogeneity across Europe on gender equality in R&I.

Overall, EC’s Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2021-2024 says that *“The integration of the gender dimension in R&I content will be a **requirement by default across the whole programme**. (...) This is particularly relevant for global challenges (...) in which sex and/or gender differences play an important role, and hence **determine the societal relevance and quality of R&I outcomes**.”* Emphasis is given to the gender relevance and quality of research. It is recognized that **research is gender-sensitive** and that **ignoring the gender dimension harms women** (notably, but not only in medicine, physiology), while **gender-sensitive research benefits society and the quality of research**.

9.3 Legislation at Belgian level

9.3.1 “Gender-mainstreaming law”, 12 January 2007

On 12 January 2007, Belgium adopted a Gender-mainstreaming Law³⁹ aiming at the strengthening of gender equality by integration of the gender dimension in policies defined at Belgian Federal level. **Gender mainstreaming** is thus no longer an informal engagement, but a **legal obligation**.

Concretely, the Gender-mainstreaming Law foresees a series of **obligations** for the government and its members as well as **for all federal administrations**.

At political level, this law foresees, among others, that the government fixes strategic objectives in the governmental declaration to be compliant with the goals of the UN World Conference in Beijing, and more particularly with the goal of **integrating gender dimension in all measures and policies undertaken**.

- Each minister is required to annually present, in his/her General Policy note, actions and measures taken to contribute to the achievement of the gender objectives.
- Each minister has to integrate gender dimension in all policies, measures and actions within his/her fields of competences.
- Each minister cares for the implementation of the strategic objectives in management plans, administration contracts, strategic planning tools of the administration under his/her responsibility.

³⁹ In French: https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/fr/activites/gender_mainstreaming/loi_gender_mainstreaming;

In Dutch: https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/activiteiten/gender_mainstreaming/wet_gender_mainstreaming

- Each project of budget of general expenses has to include, for each department, a gender note identifying credits aiming at the realization of gender equality and taking into account the gender dimension in budget lines (“gender budgeting”)?
- The government submits two assessment reports to the Federal Chambers (the first one at mid-term and the second one at the end of the term of office).

The federal administration is required to integrate gender dimension in management plans (and more generally in all strategic planning tools) under the impulse of the Presidents and Direction Committees.

Gender indicators have to be defined in order to measure the integration process of the gender dimension and the achievement of strategic objectives. Produced, collected and requested **statistics** have to be provided **as gender-disaggregated data**. Each administration is required to contribute to the gender note. Gender equality has to be taken into account in all public procurement and grant award. Gender dimension has also to be integrated in the preparation and coordination of reports to the Parliament.

Also the Law of 12 January 2007 foresees the set-up of an “interdepartmental coordination group” in charge of the implementation of the Law. This group has to include representatives of all ministers, FPS and PPS. The same Law foresees the establishment of an assessment report of the impact of each project of legislative act or regulation on the situation of all genders, the so-called “gender test”.

9.3.2 Law of 10 May 2007 against discriminations between women and men

On 10 May 2007, a Law fighting gender discriminations⁴⁰ was voted. It **assimilates discriminations based on sex reassignment, gender identity, or expression of gender, and explicitly forbids direct or indirect discrimination, orders to discriminate, harassment and sexual harassment**.

The assimilation of a direct distinction based on sex reassignment to a direct sex-based distinction (art. 4 §2 of this law) correspond to the European Directive 2006/54/CE⁴¹. The directive follows a decision of the European Court stipulating that the significance of the gender equality principle cannot be limited to forbidding discriminations based to the sense of belonging to one or the other gender, and that this principle is also valid for discriminations based on sex reassignment.

Assimilation of direct distinction based on gender identity or expression of gender to a direct distinction base on gender (art. 4 §3 of the law) is established by the law of 22 May 2014. The goal is to **achieve a protection against discriminations toward all transgender people**, and not only people intending to follow a treatment, following a treatment or having followed a treatment.

« Gender identity » refers to the deep, strong conviction and to the individual experience of life with respect to one’s own gender, which corresponds, or not, to the sex assigned at birth, including corporal experience of life.

⁴⁰ https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/Wet%2010mei07_Gender.pdf; See also comments, in French: <https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/fr/activites/transgenre/legislation>; in Dutch: <https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/fr/activites/transgenre/legislation>; in English: <https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/en>

⁴¹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2012-0222+0+DOC+XML+V0//FR>. See also the section on the European Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union and the summary of the “Transgender rights conference”: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nb_XMMGxtVU

« Gender expression » refers to the way people express their gender identity (through clothes, language, behaviour, ...) and the way it is perceived by other people. Generally, people try to make their gender expressing fitting their gender identity, independently of the sex assigned at birth. Gender expression also involves occasional forms of, or temporary expressions given to, gender.

9.3.3 National Recovery and Resilience Plan (30/4/2021)

The National Recovery Plan and Resilience Plan⁴² published on 30 April 2021 by Minister Thomas Dermine states that despite the overall good evaluation of Belgium in terms of gender equality (Belgium occupied the 9th place in the EU in terms of gender equality), "*substantial progresses have still to be made in some key-domains*". This plan identifies four key-domains where structural inequalities subsist: employment, education, energy precariousness and digital divide. In view of its situation as employer and of its missions of public service, BIRA-IASB is concerned by at least the aspects related to employment and education.

A project "Gender and work" will be led by the Institute For the Equality of Women and Men ("Centre pour l'Egalité des Femmes et des Hommes"/ "Instituut voor de Gelijkheid van Vrouwen en Mannen").

9.3.4 Royal Decree about the statute of Federal Employees (update from the "Statute" Royal Decree of 2/10/1937)

A Royal Decree published in 2 October 1937 fixes the statute of the employees of the State (currently, the Federal Government). This decree, which fixes all aspects of the statutory career, was modified several times⁴³, and several aspects of today's version are of relevance for the present GEP.

A general aspect described in Art. 7 of Part 2 about the "rights, duties, conflicts of interest and plurality of offices" specifies the right and duty of treating/being treated *with dignity and courtesy* (by) his/her superiors and subordinates. This includes avoiding any words, attitude, or presentation able to compromise dignity or courtesy, or to be detrimental to the good working of the service. In the same way, state employees need to show benevolence with respect to the users of their services.

In Art. 7bis, an amendment of this Royal Decree that came into force on 1 February 2022 promulgates the *right to disconnection*, specifying that a state (federal) employee may be contacted out of the regular working hours only for exceptional and unforeseen reasons that require urgent action. Also, the right to disconnection is recognized during vacations. Conditions and the implementation of these rights are specified in the law.

Beyond these laws promoting well-being of the state (federal) employees in general, Part VI of the Royal Decree is specifically dedicated to the *promotion of gender equality*. Art. 53 and 54 stipulate

⁴² In French: <https://dermine.belgium.be/sites/default/files/articles/FR%20-%20Plan%20national%20pour%20la%20reprise%20et%20la%20résilience.pdf>

In Dutch: https://dermine.belgium.be/sites/default/files/articles/NL%20-%20Nationaal%20plan%20voor%20herstel%20een%20veerkracht_0.pdf

⁴³ The most recent version at this time can be found on https://fedweb.belgium.be/sites/default/files/1937-10-02_%20KB%20-%20AR%202022-01-14%20_%20AR%20statuut_statut_2.pdf. This version was published on 31 January 2022 and includes as last modifications the ones of the Royal Decrees of 16.12.2022 and 14.01.2022.

that ***no designation or nomination may result in the fact that more than two thirds of the employments in the first degree (Art. 53) and second degree (Art. 54) of the hierarchy are occupied by employees with the same gender***, after application of the law on the use of language in administrative matters. In case the application of the 2/3 principle leads to non-integer result, this result has to be rounded to the higher unit. A derogation is foreseen, in the only case that *by application of the aforementioned laws (e.g., about selections, stages, etc.) and due to the result of the selection, the right of renewal of a mandate, or the ranking in function of the titles and merits, it is impossible to appoint or nominate a candidate belonging to the underrepresented gender category*. In a “Report to the King” submitted on 2 June 2012⁴⁴, the ministers proposing this law specify the framework of this modification of the “Statute” decree, explaining that these articles aim at gradually remedying the existing *manifest inequality, without calling into question coordinated laws about the use of languages, nor the competences of the candidates to an appointment or a nomination, nor to the right of renewal of a mandate*.

9.4 Legislation relevant for intersectional aspects

Beyond the gender aspects, a variety of legislative tools have been developed to address other kinds of discriminations and to support the development of a more inclusive society. These conventions and policies at the different levels of authorities (UN, European, ...) are also useful to address intersectional factors in gender equality aspects. At UN level, the Convention on the Right of Persons with disabilities provides a useful framework for intersectional aspect of gender discrimination on persons with disabilities.

At European level, the following tools are available in support of EC’s strategy for a more inclusive society :

- The EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025, adopted on 18/09/2020
- The EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation, adopted on 07/10/2020
- The LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025, adopted on 12/11/2020
- The Gender Action Plan III – a priority of EU external action, adopted on 25/11/2020
- The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, adopted on 03/03/2021.

A legislative initiative on gender-based violence is under preparation.

In these texts, the European Commission promotes an intersectional approach to address gender discrimination in these different particular frameworks.

9.4.1 UN Convention on the Right of Persons with disabilities (CRPD)

UN’s Convention on the Right of Persons with disabilities (CRPD)⁴⁵ was adopted on 13 December 2006 and ratified by Belgium on 2 July 2009.

⁴⁴ In French: https://etaamb.openjustice.be/fr/arrete-royal-du-02-juin-2012_n2012002027.html; in Dutch: https://etaamb.openjustice.be/nl/koninklijk-besluit-van-02-juni-2012_n2012002027

⁴⁵ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>; see also the Dutch site <https://www.gripvzw.be/nl/artikel/65/tekst-vn-verdrag-inzake-de-rechten-van-personen-met-een-handicap>

The CRPD emphasizes in its preamble *the need to incorporate a gender perspective in all efforts to promote the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities*. It also recognizes in its Article 6 that **women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination**, and that States Parties should *take measures to ensure their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and all appropriate to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women to guarantee these rights*.

In Article 16 on *Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse*, the Convention explicitly mentions the need to consider **gender-based aspects in all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, educational and other measures to protect persons with disabilities**, as well as *all appropriate measures to prevent all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, and to promote the physical, cognitive and psychological recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration of persons with disabilities who become victims of any form of exploitation, violence or abuse*.

Finally, CRPD's States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure access for persons with disabilities to **health services that are gender-sensitive** (Art. 25, "Health").

9.4.2 EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025

The EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025⁴⁶ was presented on 18 September 2020 in a Communication from the EC to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committees of the Regions. It considers the combination of the *different forms of racism with discrimination and hatred on other grounds, including, e.g., gender, needing to be taken into account through an intersectional approach*.

9.4.3 EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation

EU's Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation⁴⁷ aims at supporting Roma in the EU. It concerns seven key areas of focus: equality, inclusion, participation, education, employment, health, and housing.

This framework recognises that (...) *all Roma can experience discrimination and disempowerment, and takes an intersectional approach, sensitive to the combination of ethnicity with other aspects of identity and the ways in which such intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination*. The Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Aspects of **gender employment gaps** are explicitly mentioned. Targets and measures should be set out to *reflect diversity among Roma, including gender-responsive (...) measures*.

Awareness of the consequences of multiple discrimination against Roma women will be aligned with the EU-wide communication campaign on combating gender stereotypes, which applies an intersectional approach to all spheres of life, as part of the gender equality strategy.

⁴⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en

⁴⁷ More information and link to the text on https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1813

9.4.4 EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025

On 12 November 2020, Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli presented EU's lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) Equality Strategy 2020-2025⁴⁸, aiming at building a Union *celebrating diversity as part of our collective richness, where all people can be themselves without risk of discrimination, exclusion or violence*. This strategy is based on 4 pillars, including: *tackling discrimination against LGBTIQ people, ensuring LGBTIQ people's safety, building LGBTIQ inclusive societies, and leading the call for LGBTIQ equality around the world*.

Also in this text, the use of **intersectionality** is promoted to take into account different elements in the personality of anyone, including *sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sex characteristics*. "We must make clear progress towards an EU where LGBTIQ people, in all their diversity, are equal, safe and free to fully participate in society."

9.4.5 Gender Action Plan III in EU external action

The Gender Action Plan III⁴⁹ (GAP III) "*putting women and girls' rights at the heart of the global recovery for a gender-equal world*" put forward ambitious plans to *promote gender equality and women's empowerment through all external action of the European Union*. Aiming to "*put forward ambitious plans to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through all external action of the European Union*" and emphasizing that "*the health and socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis are disproportionately affecting women and girls*", the GAP III provides the EU with a policy framework with five pillars of action. Amongst them:

- *shared strategic vision and close cooperation with Member States and partners at multilateral, regional and country level* has to include **fighting against gender-based violence and promoting the economic, social and political empowerment of women and girls**.
- The action plans calls for the European Union to **lead by example, including by establishing gender-responsive and gender-balanced leadership at (...) management levels**.
- The GAP III adopts a new approach to **monitoring, evaluation and learning**, with a stronger focus on measuring results by **setting up a quantitative, qualitative and inclusive monitoring system to increase public accountability, ensure transparency and access to information on its assistance to gender equality worldwide**.

With as key objective the contribution to empowering women, girls and young people to fully use their rights and increase their participation in political, economic, social, and cultural life, GAP III strongly supports the **participation and leadership of girls and women**, promoting it, for example, through governance programmes and public administration reforms.

⁴⁸ More information and link to the text on https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_20_2126

⁴⁹ More information and link to the text on https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2184

9.4.6 EC Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030

On 3 March 2021, a Communication from the EC to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committees of the Regions presented EC's Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030⁵⁰.

The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 intends to tackle the diverse challenges that persons with disabilities face. It aims to progress on all areas of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, both at EU and Member State level.

Building up on UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it has as goal to ensure, both at EU and Member State level, that **persons with disabilities in Europe, regardless of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation:**

- enjoy their human rights,
- have **equal opportunities**,
- have **equal access** to participate in society and economy,
- are able to decide where, how and with whom they live,
- can move freely in the EU regardless of their support needs,
- **no longer experience discrimination.**

The strategy *promotes an intersectional perspective, addressing specific barriers faced by persons with disabilities who are at the intersection of identities (gender, racial, ethnic, sexual, religious), or in a difficult socioeconomic or other vulnerable situation.*

9.4.7 Belgian Federal Action Plan Handicap 2021-2024

Very recently, a *Federal Action Plan Handicap 2021-2024*⁵¹ was set-up with all ministers and state secretaries under the coordination of Minister for the persons with disabilities Karine Lalieux to identify initiatives and measures to be taken during the current legislature in order to strengthen Belgian legislation in these matters. The action plan covers a wide range of domains and includes gender-related aspects. It also recognizes the need of addressing gender-specific challenges of persons with disabilities following an intersectional approach. More specifically, Action 75 investigates the possibility to include handicap to the existing *inclusive budget monitoring*. Actions 113 and 114 concern the highlight of the disability aspects of the fight against gender-based sexual violence and the assessment of the accessibility of centres in charge of sexual violence for persons with a disability.

⁵⁰ More information and link to the text on

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8376&furtherPubs=yes>

⁵¹ In French:

<https://socialsecurity.belgium.be/sites/default/files/content/docs/fr/publications/handicap/handicap-plan-federal-2021-2024-fr.pdf>; in Dutch:

<https://socialsecurity.belgium.be/sites/default/files/content/docs/nl/publicaties/handicap/handicap-federaal-plan-2021-2024-nl.pdf>