

Gender Equality Plan

2024-2027

Stefan S. Nicolau Institute of Virology

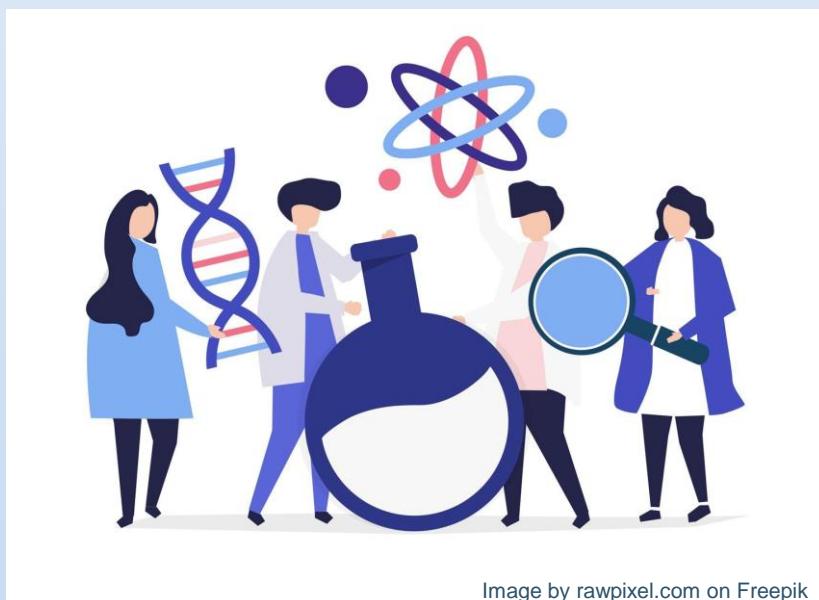


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Introduction

Gender equality stands as a fundamental principle within the European Union, encapsulating a core value and a pivotal aspect of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Universities and research institutions within the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area are dedicated to fortifying themselves as inclusive hubs of excellence promoting equal opportunities, non-discrimination, equity and equality, supporting open, democratic and fair societies, as well as sustained growth, entrepreneurship, integration and employment.

Gender equality finds global recognition through its inclusion in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals outlined in the UN 2030 Agenda. The overarching aim is to diminish disparities and eradicate discrimination across all spheres.

In adherence to European values and mandates, the Gender Equality Plan of Stefan S. Nicolau Institute of Virology, Bucharest (IVN) emerges as a strategic document through which the institution assumes an institutional commitment to promote and monitor gender equality, to integrate gender equality into institutional culture and practices; it is an institutional commitment, a plan that is periodically revised according to the dynamics and needs of the institutional environment and society.

The overarching goal is to increase awareness and sensitize IVN employees to the significance and essence of gender equality, thereby preventing any actions contrary to these principles. The plan is a dynamic document, which allows for subsequent modifications according to directives of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

The Gender Equality Plan is structured around a set of objectives that align with EIGE, promoting equal opportunities in universities and research centers. These strategies include:

- promoting equitable career advancement for individuals of all genders to in order to make the most of their full human potential,
- enhancing decision-making processes by addressing gender imbalances, and integrating gender perspectives into research endeavors,
- incorporating gender variables in research,
- diversifying approaches/opinions and methodologies in research and teaching processes;
- stimulating cultural change for gender awareness.

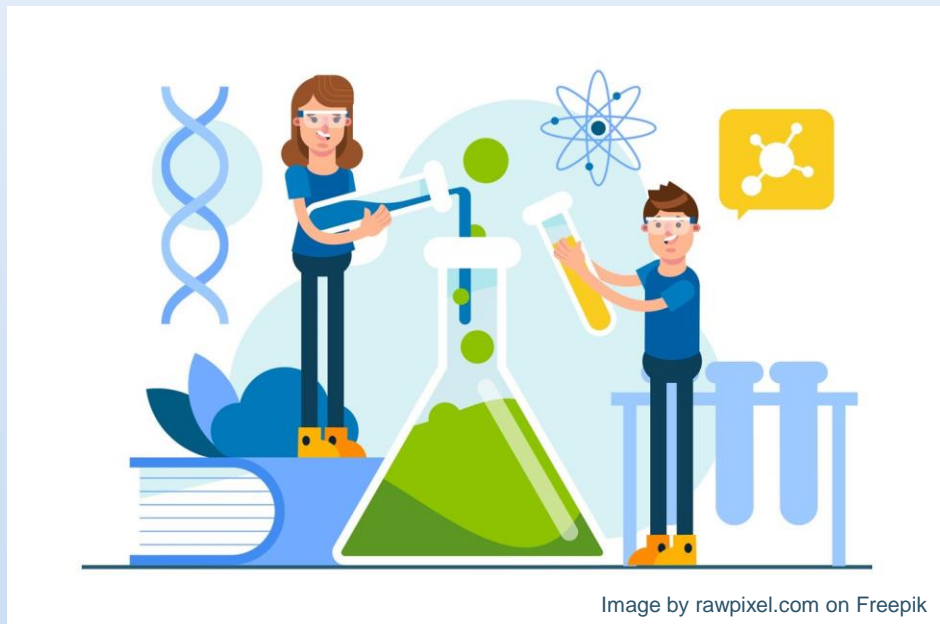


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Institutional context

IVN is an Romanian Academy research institute with the mission to support the national strategy in combating the infectious disease and other public health conditions, bridging the gap between clinical investigation and the application of basic science.

The institute accomplishes its objective by generating reports that increase the range, quality and relevance of the national agenda for health policy and medical practice, by testing the practical application of new diagnostic technologies in the field of various conditions, thereby increasing their operational relevance, and developing new antivirals and therapeutical technologies that meet the needs of health care practitioners.

Considering the essence of the gender equality principle and its crucial function within both broader society and the academic sphere, IVN management team together with the designated working group developed this IVN's Gender Equality Plan for the period spanning 2024-2027.

In line with the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy, IVN carried out an internal analysis of how gender equality is addressed within the institution and an overview of the national legislative framework. Following this internal analysis, the working group proposed a series of measures aimed at addressing those institutional issues that would have ensured more equal opportunities within the organization. These measures were tested in several meetings, both with institutional partners, as well as with the IVN management team and administrative staff, and the feedback was used in the drafting of a series of actions that formed the basis of this IVN's Gender Equality Plan for the period spanning 2024-2027.

Through the adoption of this plan, informed by internal assessments and in alignment with national and European directives, the objective is to extend the tangible and meaningful application of non-discrimination and gender equality principles to IVN's entire organization.

The document is in line with the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy, with the Romanian legislation in force, having 5 fundamental areas, which are concretized in the Action Plan, as follows:

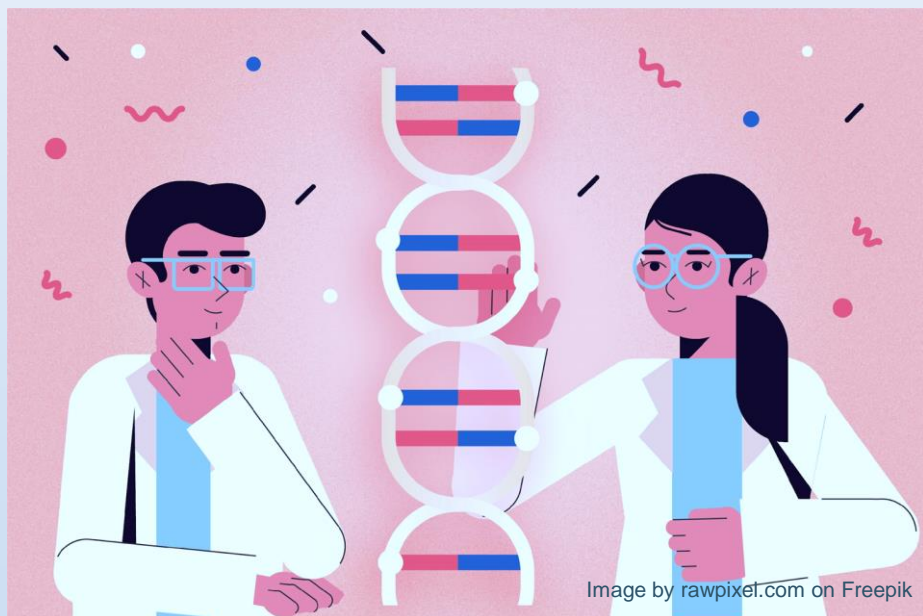
Area 1. Work-life balance and organizational culture

Area 2. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Area 3. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Area 4. Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

Area 5. Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment



Area 1. Work-life balance and organizational culture

Proposed measures

Ensuring that all staff are properly supported to advance their career alongside personal responsibilities that they may hold outside of the workplace, including caring responsibilities.

Objectives:

Increase work efficiency and improve work life balance for employees returning from parental leave and those with caring responsibilities such as childcare and care for other dependents (e.g. people with disabilities, elderly relatives).

Activities:

Reintegration of staff after career breaks, to get accustomed to the recent developments in the institution and the current projects through informative sessions, active mentoring and support;

Effective workload management ensuring equitable allocation and distribution of tasks, taking into consideration factors such as skill sets, availability, and responsibilities;

Implementing flexible working time arrangements allowing employees to adjust their schedules according to personal needs, fostering greater work-life balance and productivity.

Beneficiaries:

Researchers, technical and administrative staff

Performance indicators:

Raising awareness about the importance of work-life balance
Increase employees' work efficiency and professional satisfaction

Area 2. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Proposed measures

Mentoring for leadership positions and internal personal development programmes

Objectives:

To establish dedicated structures supporting gender equality and to increase the number of employees acceding to leadership positions

Activities:

Elect responsible persons at the level of departments and administrative units with the responsibilities of monitoring and evaluating procedures and practices, to encourage and guarantee gender equality.

Regularly collect from departments data in digital format reflecting the gender diversity of staff in order to generate a periodic report monitoring the dynamics of diversity in IVN.

Organization of regular meetings with IVN management team to maximize the GEP impact.

Providing training for researchers, and administrative staff that it will assure GEP at all levels of the organization.

Promotion of gender-mixed teams in all employment groups of the IVN

Beneficiaries:

Researchers, technical and administrative staff

Performance indicators:

An annual report on gender equality

GEP implementation meetings

Training for gender-sensitive awareness

Institutional structures for gender equality

Area 3. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Proposed measures:

Reviewing existing selection processes and procedures at all stages to ensure equal access of women and men to recruitment, selection, and career progression process, prevent unconscious bias, increase transparency, and establish a code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers.

Objectives:

Raise awareness within the institute, and especially among recruitment experts, on the possible stereotypes that may appear in the selection process.

Providing equal access to training, mentorship, and advancement opportunities to maintain gender equality in career progression.

Activities:

Research for optimal procedures regarding gender balance in recruitment and career advancement.

Review the internal recruitment, selection, and career progression policies and develop a specific set of measures and instructions to ensure that the recruitment, selection, and career progression processes are fair and unbiased.

Share the measures and the established protocols to recruiting experts and the human resources department and provide access to guidelines for gender-sensitive training for recruiting experts to improve institutional commitment to gender equality.

Use of gender-neutral language in job descriptions, implementing blind recruitment techniques where possible, implementing structured interview processes to reduce subjective judgments.

Beneficiaries:

Newly recruited staff, academics and researchers, recruiting experts and the human resources department.

Performance indicators:

Training for gender-sensitive awareness;

A code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers.

Documentation each time a new position is opened.

An annual report on gender equality using quantitative indicators.

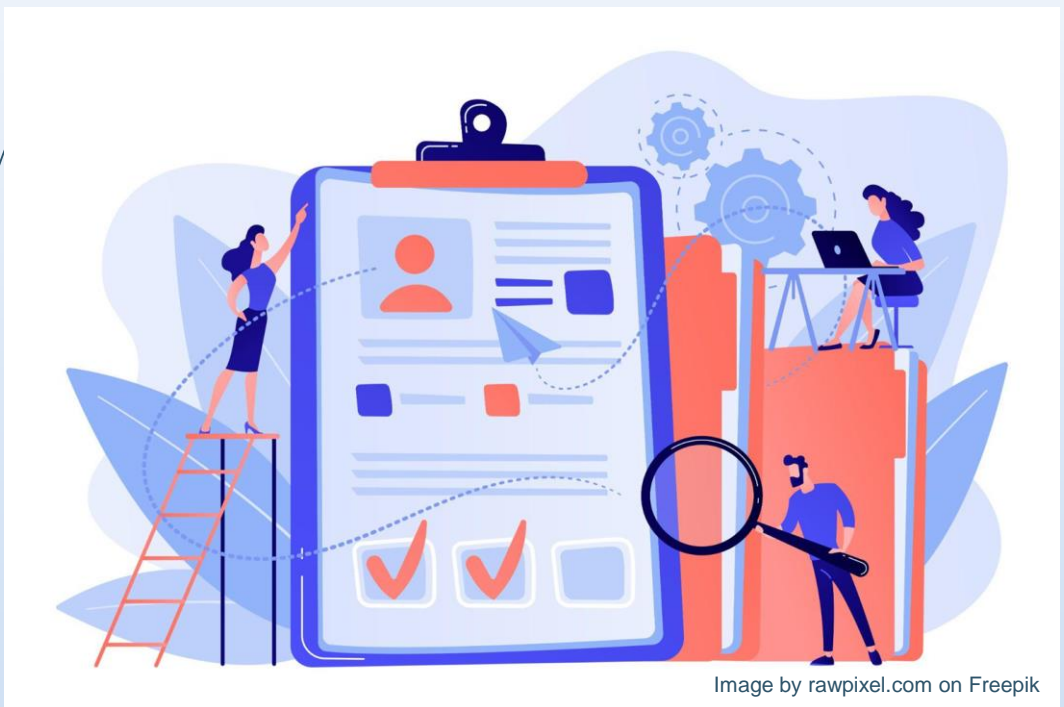


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Area 4. Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

Proposed measures

Investing in equal opportunities for both men and women to ensure a gender balance in teams. This not only promotes better performance but also helps attract top-level professionals. Investing in a gender-responsive approach to research and teaching content can enhance the quality and validity of the content.

Objectives

Incorporating the gender dimension into research is integral to the research design. It should be methodically monitored throughout the research process. Innovative and educational content can help incorporate a wide range of perspectives and strive for exceptional, high-quality, reliable, safe, and relevant results. Adopting this approach has the potential to yield better results and make a more significant impact.

Activities

It involves making a deliberate effort to address the missing content from research and teaching, and highlighting these topics and their lack of representation.

In the context of education, gender mainstreaming is instrumental in eliminating pernicious gender roles, workspaces, and learning materials

Creating a more diverse curriculum and research policies and practices. It involves making a deliberate effort to address the missing content from research and teaching, and highlighting these topics and their lack of representation.

Beneficiaries:

Researchers, technical and administrative staff

Performance indicators

Ensure any educational materials used show genders in equal measure.

Achieving a more diverse curriculum, research policies, and practices.

Eliminate inequalities prevalent in research and education spaces.



Area 5. Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

Proposed measures:

Gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, can have severe physical, emotional, and psychological consequences. To prevent this problem, we need customized strategies based on the unique challenges of the research environment. We must create a safe, respectful environment that promotes gender equality and protects all individuals. The plan for the Stefan S. Nicolau Institute of Virology aims to apply measures against gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

Objective

Implementation of policies to prevent gender-based harassment and violence

Dissemination and communication of the policies addressed

Carrying out educational and training programs to increase awareness

Training courses for people involved in the investigation of cases that may arise

Establishing reporting mechanisms

Providing support services and resources

Collaboration and partnership

Activity

Establishing a comprehensive policy against gender-based harassment and violence in line with European law, which clearly defines and prohibits all forms of gender-based violence and sexual harassment, outlines reporting procedures, and ensures confidentiality and impartiality, as well as the timely investigation and resolution of complaints.

The policy against harassment and gender-based violence should be communicated and disseminated to all staff, researchers, students and administrative staff.

Creating and implementing educational programs and training initiatives for administrative staff, researchers, and students to raise awareness of gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and promote respectful behavior that cultivates respect, empathy, and gender equality in research organizations.

Specialized training for impartial investigations on gender-based violence and harassment. Safe online reporting systems available.

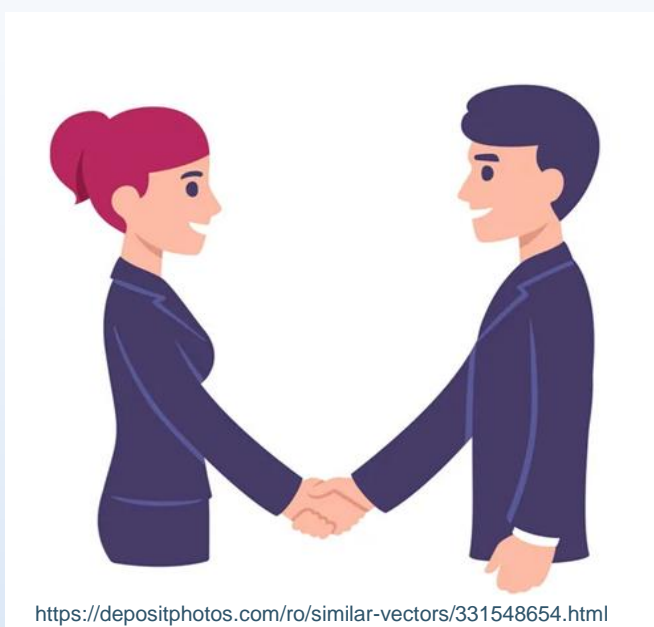
Victims of gender-based violence and sexual harassment should have access to counseling, psychological support, medical care, legal assistance, and referral to external support services.

Beneficiaries:

Researchers, technical and administrative staff

Performance indicators

Periodic monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of the plan are necessary to ensure its effectiveness, identify challenges, and effectively address emerging issues and needs.



Director,

SR I (R4) , Dr. Carmen C. Diaconu