



Research Institute Davos

Approved on 08.06.2025 by the Director AO Research Institute Davos,  
Executive Director AO R&D

R. Geoff Richards

# **Gender Equality Plan**

## **2023-25**

AO Research Institute Davos

## **Report year 2 (2024)**



**Contents:**

1. Monitoring and reporting of the GEP.....	3
2. Allocation of resources.....	3
3. Changes in the Gender Equality Working Group .....	4
4. Collection of sex-disaggregated data .....	4
5. Survey .....	7
6. Action plan .....	13
7. Conclusions.....	20
8. Bibliography.....	21

## 1. Monitoring and reporting of the GEP

The Horizon Europe criterion requires that research organizations must carry out annual monitoring and reporting, based on targets and indicators, of the progress and efficiency of the measures of the Gender Equality Plan 2023-2025 ([link](#)) as well as provide basis for corrective actions (figure 1). To develop an effective GEP, an initial assessment of the Institute’s gender equality status was conducted in 2021 and 2022. The findings from this assessment provided the baseline for the GEP 2023-2025, enabling the establishment of clear objectives and a prioritized set of actions. In 2023, a report of the first year of implementation ([link](#)) was carried out to evaluate progress and measure ongoing efforts. In 2024, a second follow up was conducted. This included:

- Allocation of resources
- Changes in the Gender Equality Working group (GEWG)
- Collection of sex-disaggregated data
- Survey among staff members
- Review and update of the action plan

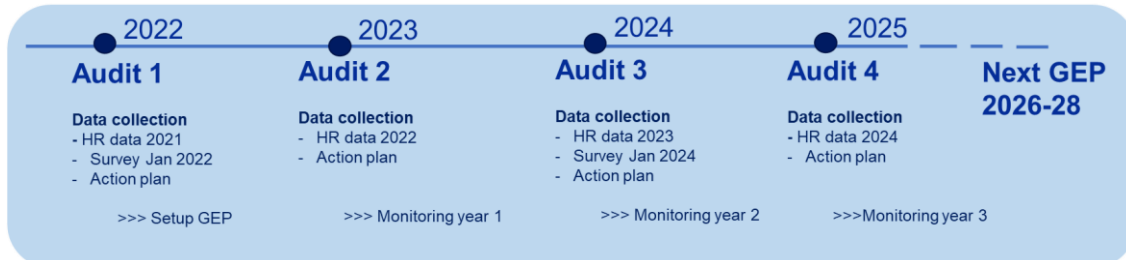


Figure 1: GEP 2023 – 2025.

## 2. Allocation of resources

ARI has assessed the type and volume of resources required to implement the GEP and has committed the following:

- A dedicated ARI gender equality function composed by one gender equality officer, a team with different expertise, including one Human Resources (HR) representative, and an executive leadership member (Director of the Institute), publicly supporting the whole function (table 1).
- Earmarked staff time assigned for the whole AO Research Institute (ARI) gender equality function to work throughout the whole GEP cycle.

### 3. Changes in the Gender Equality Working Group (GEWG)

In 2024, the working group was reorganized due to staff changes (table 1). In addition, a new task force was established to work on area 1 “*Work life balance and organizational culture*”, consisting of volunteer ARI members (Zhen Li, Daniel Arens, Alisa Hangartner, Christoph Sprecher, Lena Gens, James Tapia-Dean).

Table 1: Composition of the GEWG, name, initials, and function.

GEWG	Men	Women
<b>Leadership</b>	Geoff Richards (GR) Director ARI & Executive Director AO Foundation (AOF) R&D Martin Stoddart (MS) Program Leader, Focus Area Leader Daniel Arens (DA) Deputy Leader Focus Area	Nora Goudsouzian (NG) Program Deputy, Focus Area Leader Sibylle Grad (SG) Program Deputy, Focus Area Leader Claudia Barblan (CB) Manager Administrative Services Zhen Li (ZL) Deputy Leader Focus Area
<b>Administrative</b>	Ulrich Bentz (UB) Quality Management and Procurement	Nunzia Di Luise (NDL) Gender Equality Officer
<b>Student/ researcher</b>	Marco Chitto' (MC) Postdoc Maximilian Heumann (MH) PhD student	Elena Della Bella (EDB) Senior Research Scientist Maria Hildebrand (HIM) Project Leader
<b>Human Resources (HR)</b>		Bettina Brühlmann (BB) Senior HR Business Partner - AOF

### 4. Collection of sex-disaggregated data

Since sex-disaggregated data from HR are only available after year-end and processed during the first quarter of the following year, the current 2024 GEP Report presents sex-disaggregated data from 2023. The data collection for 2024 will be included in the next ARI GEP Report 2025. The HR team provided sex-disaggregated data across various aspects of the sex distribution within the Institute.

#### Sex distribution of ARI staff

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, the headcount distribution is very close, with males representing 52% and females 48%. This suggests that ARI maintains an equal sex representation in terms of the number of employees, which is a positive sign of inclusivity in the workforce. When considering FTEs, the sex distribution remains balanced.

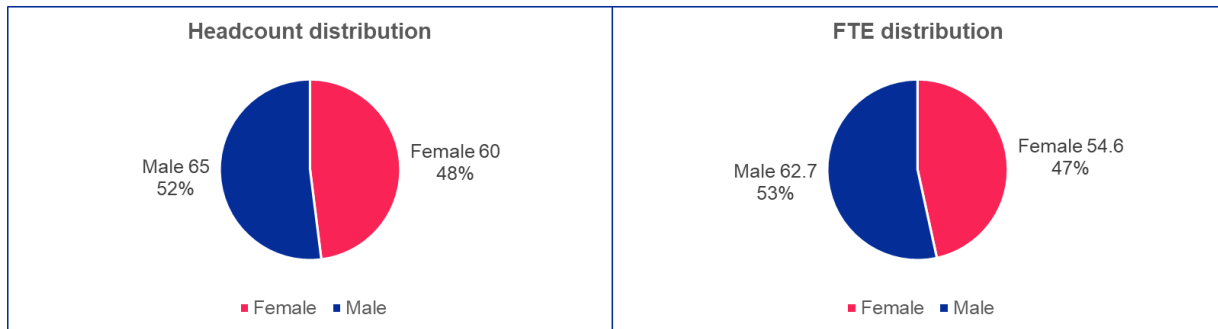


Figure 1: Headcount and FTE sex distributions.

Sex distribution across part-time

As of January 1st, 2023, 7 males (10.7% of the male workforce) and 14 females (23.3% of the female workforce) are working part-time. In total, there are 21 part-time positions, with 66.6% occupied by females and 33.3% by males (figure 2). While females still hold the majority of part-time positions, it is noteworthy that there has been a slight increase in part-time positions among males, rising from 5 part-time males in 2021 (6.9% of the male workforce) to 7 part-time males in 2023 (10.7%).

These findings suggest that part-time work is becoming more accepted among male employees, though it remains more common among females. This shift could be attributed to the introduction of a policy for improved flexibility, such as the new institutional career path, which outlines requirements for part-time work.

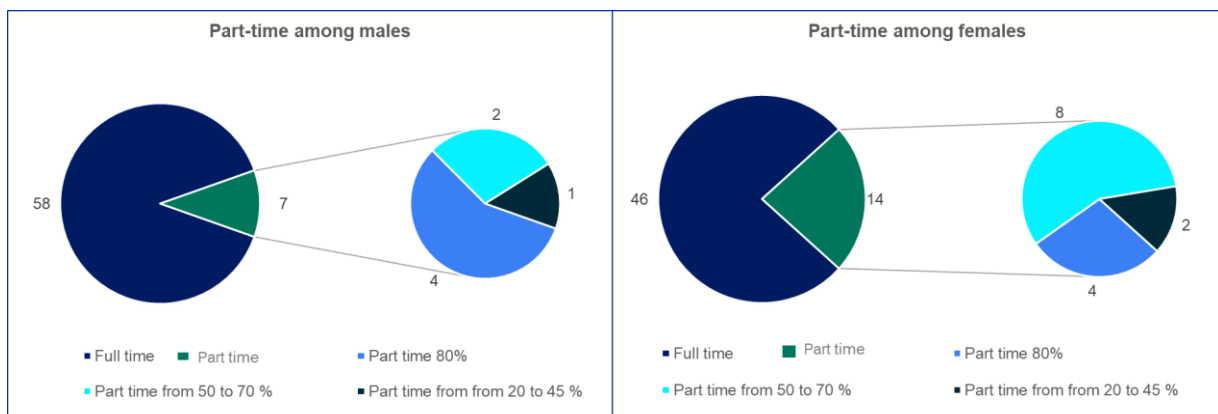


Figure 2: Sex distribution across part-time.

Sex distribution across function classes

16 different function classes were categorized into 5 main groups: A) Guests, extended guests, externals B) Apprentices, interns, postdocs, and students; C) Senior technical staff, technical

staff (senior animal take carer, animal take carers, lab technicians), and senior administrative staff D) Junior project managers, project managers, project coordinators, E) Executive and middle managers, senior project manager.

The results show that groups A, B, and C exhibit a near equal distribution. However, males prevail in higher decision-making roles (group E), where females remain significantly underrepresented, accounting for only 24% of the positions (figure 3). Notably, despite slight changes in the categorization of the function classes over the past 3 years, the percentage of women in higher decision-making roles has remained low, never exceeding 29%. Specifically, the percentage was 27% in 2021, 29% in 2022, and 24% in 2023.

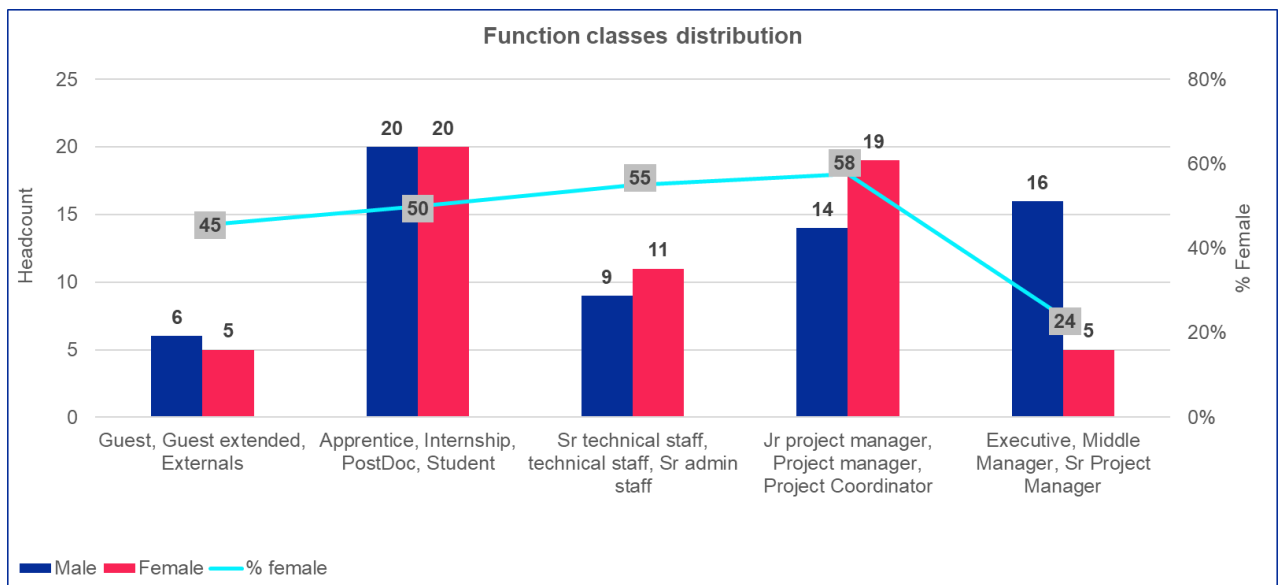


Figure 3: Function classes distribution.

Sex distribution across type of contracts

Among the permanent contracts, males slightly prevail, having received 56.5% of them. However, there is a near equal distribution concerning temporary contracts. There is no steady upward or downward trend for either gender in permanent or temporary contracts, possibly influenced by project cycles or funding.

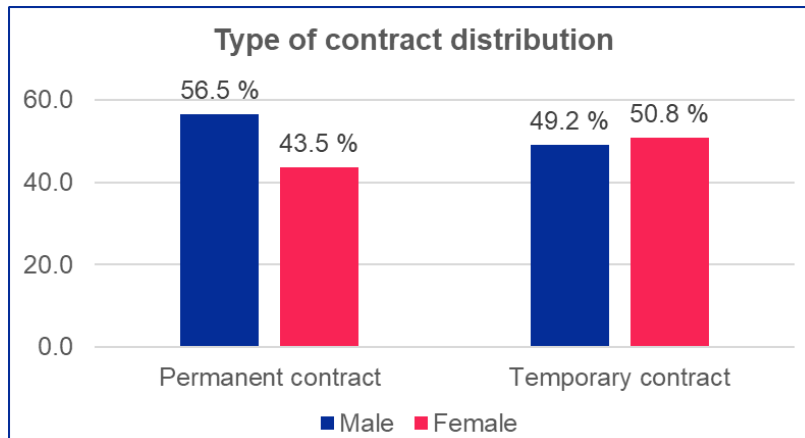


Figure 4: Type of contracts distribution.

## 5. Survey

In order to monitor the progress and efficiency of the measures implemented during the first year of the GEP, a second survey was conducted among ARI employees. The survey provided valuable data on the perceptions and experiences of staff members, thereby supporting the identification of new targets and corrective actions.

The survey design closely mirrored that of the initial assessment, addressing the 5 content areas recommended by the EU, along with an additional section dedicated to collecting demographic information. To avoid duplication of results from the first survey conducted in 2022, the wording "*in the last two years*" was systematically incorporated into relevant questions. The survey was developed using Microsoft Office Outlook forms and distributed to ARI staff (n = 121) on February 5, 2024, with a response window of three weeks. In order to address data protection concerns, all responses were collected anonymously, handled confidentially, and presented exclusively in aggregated form, ensuring that individual respondents could not be identified. The survey consisted of 34 questions, comprising both open-ended and closed formats.

A response rate of 62% - with 75 responses out of 121 recipients - was achieved, which is considered high and indicates a significant level of interest among ARI employees in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility, (DEIA) topics. Nevertheless, the response rate showed a slight decline compared to the first survey (72%), possibly indicating a reduced willingness among staff to participate in repeated surveys. For clarity in the presentation of the survey results, Section 6, "Demographic information," will be presented first. In addition, only the most significant findings, as identified by the GEWG, will be reported.

**Section 6: Demographic information**

The section provided an overview of the survey participants' profiles (figure 5). Participation was slightly higher among females with 4 respondents choosing not to disclose their gender (Q#30). The largest age group was 26–35 years (41%), indicating a mainly early- to mid-career demographic, while 47% were over 36, reflecting strong representation from experienced professionals. Only 12% of respondents were under 25 years old (Q#31).

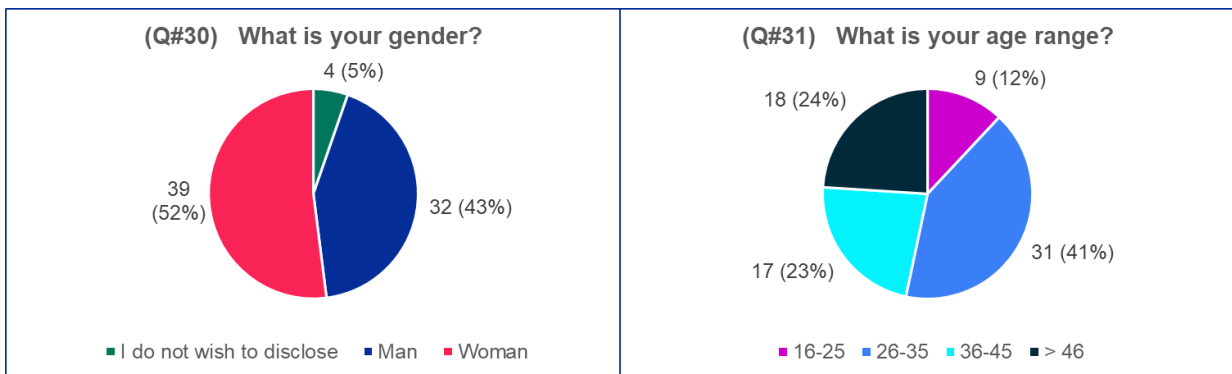


Figure 5: Gender and age distribution among respondents.

The distribution of respondents across the three functional categories was relatively balanced, reflecting an equitable representation across different career stages and levels of managerial responsibility (Q#32). In terms of education, the majority of respondents held advanced degrees: 62 participants reported holding a Doctorate, Master's, or Bachelor's degree, while 13 indicated a professional or college-level qualification (Q#33).

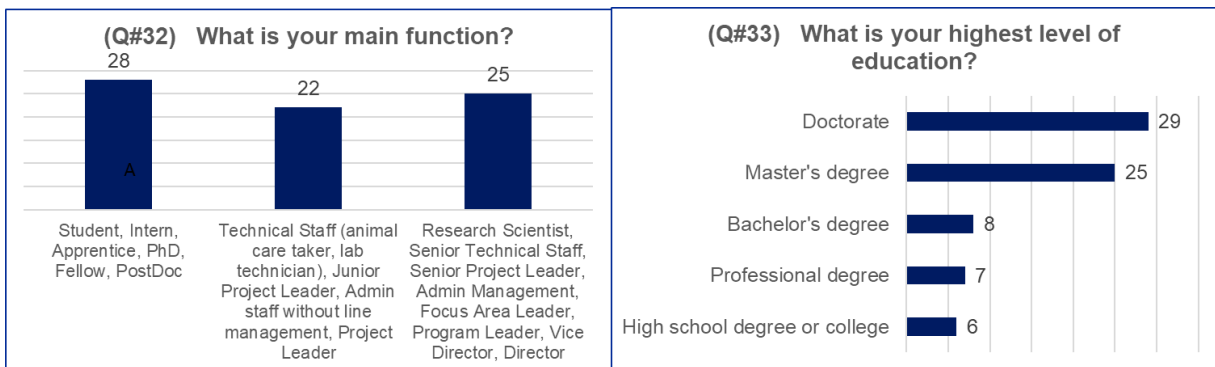


Figure 6: Function and education distribution.

### Section 1: Organization culture

The section provided an understanding of the perceptions of the staff members on the DEIA topics. The results showed that there are no significant differences with the first survey. The top three aspects that staff associate with "diversity" remain consistent: *Gender* (n=51), *Cultural* (n=41), and *Ethnicity* (n=39), (Q#1), figure not shown. The leading reasons for prioritizing equity, diversity, and inclusion are also reaffirmed: *moral duty* (n=49), *explicit institutional value* (n=44), *part of social responsibility* (n=42), (Q#2), figure not shown. The primary actors identified to lead DEIA strategies include: *HR department* (n=47), *dedicated person/team* (n=35), *executive level* (n=35), (Q#3), figure not shown.

### Section 2: Work-life balance

When looking at the current relationship status of the respondents, the group is nearly evenly split between those in committed relationships (51%) and singles (45%), suggesting a diversity of life stages among respondents, (Q#4), figure not shown.

A significant portion (40%) have no children nor plan to have children, while over half (51%) are parents (Q#5), figure not shown.

Unpaid caregiving for non-children dependents is not widespread, but the 13% who do engage in this work may require flexible working (Q#6), figure not shown.

Most respondents either share caregiving responsibilities or are not the primary caregiver. Only a small portion (n=6) shoulder the bulk of caregiving duties (Q#7), figure not shown.

74% of respondents (42% *strongly agree*, 32% *agree*) feel that their line manager supports flexible working arrangements (Q#8). 62% of respondents (17% *strongly agree*, 45% *agree*) feel they are able to strike the right balance between work responsibilities and home life (Q#9). The % in the brackets in figure 7 refer to the last survey in 2022.

The majority of respondents perceive a strong level of support for flexible working and feel capable of maintaining a work-life balance. This represents an overall positive outcome toward flexible and supportive working conditions. However, these figures show a slight decline compared to the 2022 survey results. One potential explanation is the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, which may have reduced the level of workplace flexibility experienced during the pandemic. The shift back to more laboratory working patterns could be impacting on employees' sense of balance.

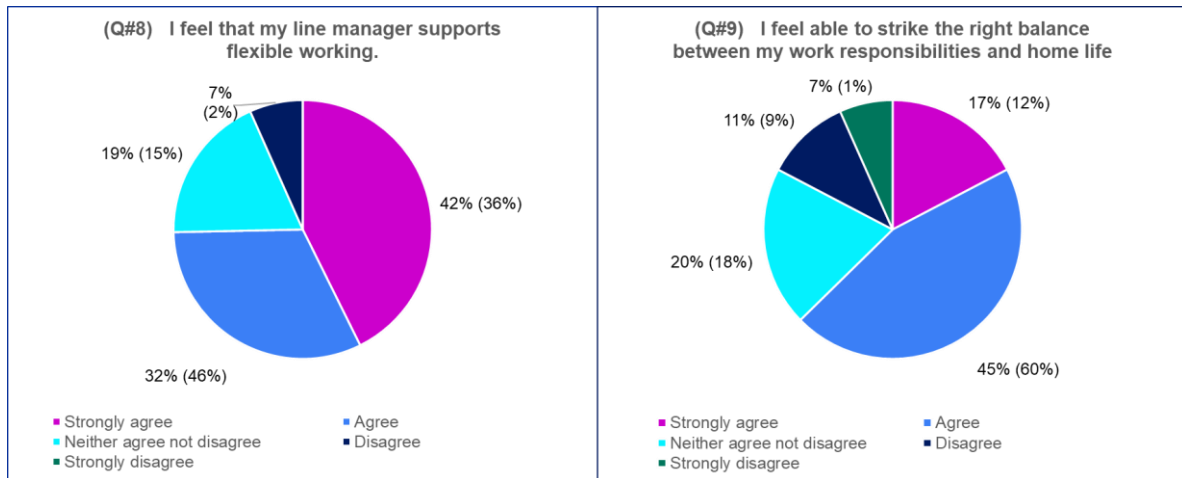


Figure 7: Work-life balance. The % in the brackets refer to the last survey in 2022.

#### Section 4: Recruitment and career progression

The section provided data from the last two years on the perceptions of ARI staff members on the correlation between gender and job opportunities in terms of recruitment, promotions, and appointments.

94% of respondents (73% *always* + 21% *often*) reported feeling treated equally with respect to gender over the last two years, with no significant difference from last survey (Q#11), figure not shown.

Regarding perceptions of promotions based solely on individual performance, 56% responded positively (19% *extremely well* and 37% *very well*), consistent with 2022 results. Despite this, female respondents are slightly more likely to perceive that promotions are not based solely on individual performance (Q#14).

75% of respondents believe females and males have the same opportunities, an increase from 63% (2022). At the same time, the perception that females have fewer opportunities dropped from 32% (2022) to 21% (2024). 11 female respondents believe women have fewer opportunities, compared to 4 male respondents (Q#15).

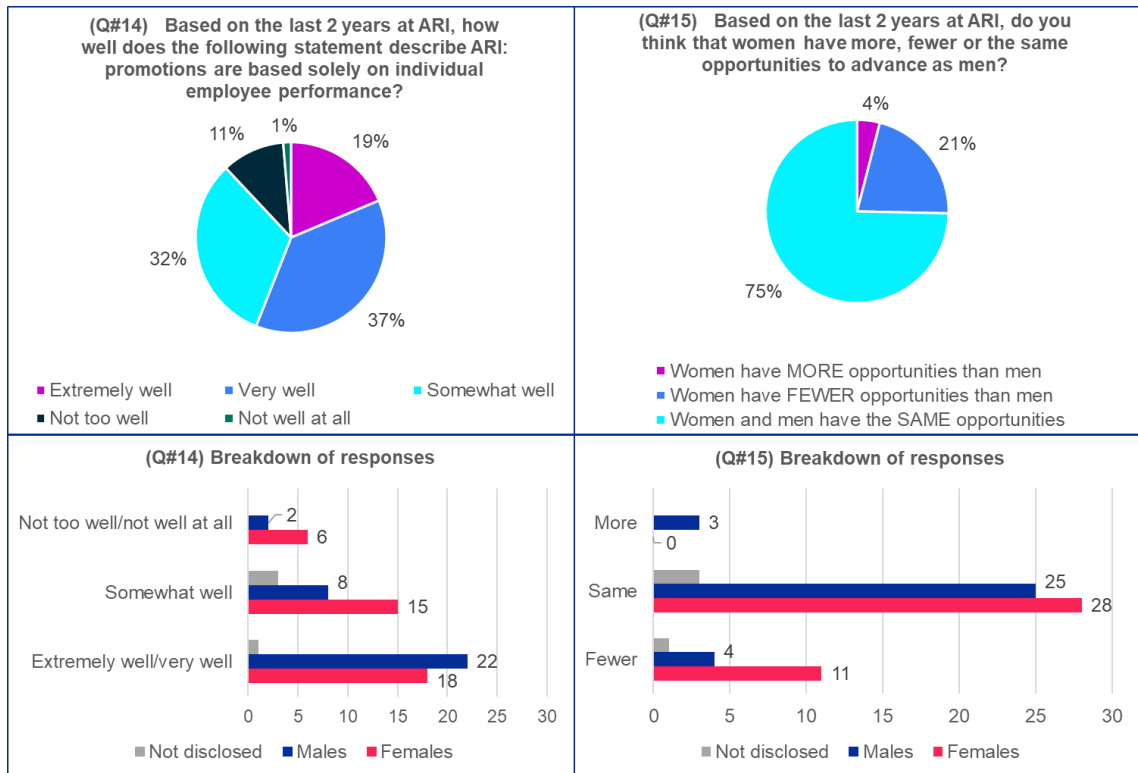


Figure 8: Recruitment and career progression.

This indicates that despite overall improvement, a few female employees remain more likely to perceive unequal opportunities. The GEP at ARI may have improved overall sentiment regarding equal opportunities. While these perceptions are valuable, their relevance may be limited by the fact that 75% of respondents have been at ARI for less than five years, potentially reducing their exposure to long-term patterns in promotions, (Q#16), figure not shown. This short tenure may influence how staff perceive fairness and opportunities within the organization.

Only 25% of respondents believe ARI should be doing more to increase equity and inclusivity while 73% feel current efforts are sufficient, (Q#18), figure not shown.

This reflects a largely positive view of ARI's current DEIA efforts. A few strategies for improving current efforts were suggested by the participants. Among others, «*Increasing awareness on DEIA topics by organizing workshops*» was suggested by 6 respondents, «*Promoting more women in leadership positions*» was suggested by 3 respondents, «*Involving more diverse people into gender equality group and management team for decision making*» was suggested by 3 respondents (Q#19), figure not shown.

Section 5: Gender-based violence

This section analysed staff member experiences and potential responses in the last 2 years to bullying, harassment or gender discrimination.

5 respondents reported experiencing some form of harassment or discrimination in the last two years. Of these, only 1 reported it formally (Q#20), figure not shown.

67% said they *know where to go* for assistance if needed (Q#22). In Q#23, (% in the brackets in figure 9 refer to last survey in 2022), while 54% indicated they would make a formal complaint, 46% were either unsure (39%) or would not (7%), citing reasons such as *fear of retaliation* (6 respondents) and a *preference to address the issue personally or with a manager* (5 respondents), (Q#24), figure not shown. .

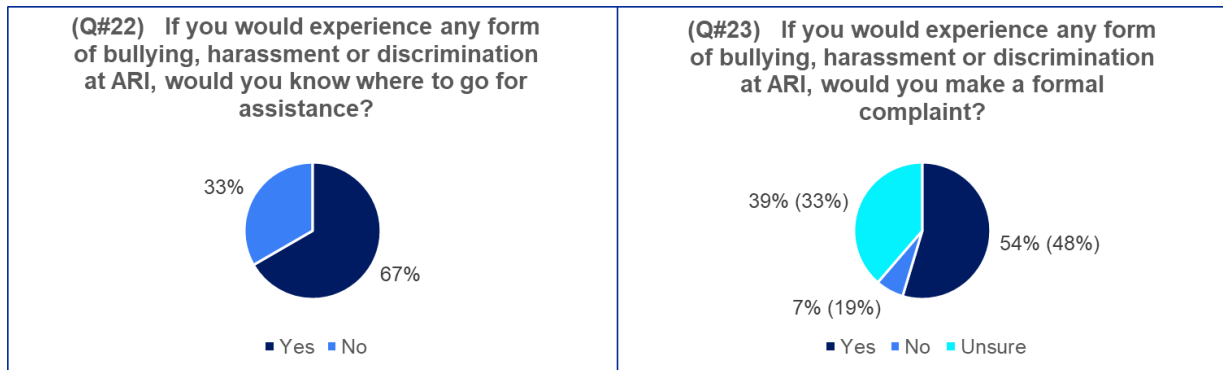


Figure 9: Gender-based harassment. The % in the brackets refer to last survey in 2022.

These responses show an increased level of awareness and willingness to act, reflecting a positive trend since ARI introduced the GEP. However, the data also show that there are still concerns and a need to build more trust in the reporting process and the protections offered.

Section 6 Sex and/or ethnicity dimensions into research content

This section looks at how much ARI research staff know about and use sex and/or ethnicity differences in their research. Only research staff were asked to respond.

Awareness of the benefits of including sex and/or ethnicity has increased from 55% (2022) to 80% (2024), (Q#29), although 20% of research staff (n=13) are still not aware. In practice, 40% have included sex and/or ethnicity aspects in their research, while 18% thought about it but didn't follow through (Q#27). Meanwhile, 42% have never considered it. Common reasons include "not being in the position to decide how research is done", "thinking it's not relevant", and "facing budget limitations" (Q#28), figure not shown.

These high % of respondents (60%) non including the sex and/or ethnicity differences may reflect the number of students, interns, or lab staff without decision-making roles, as well as the high cost of such studies.

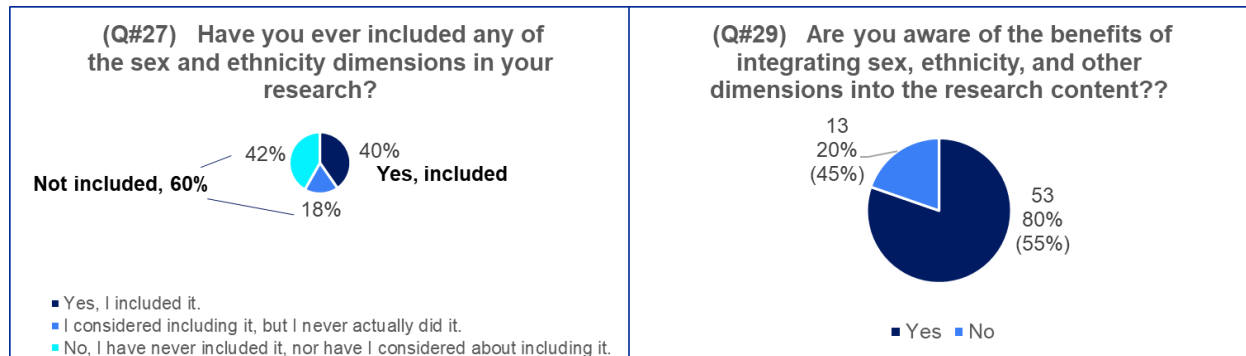


Figure 10: Inclusion of sex and/or ethnicity into research content. The % in the brackets refer to last survey in 2022.

## 6. Action plan

Based on the results of the initial assessment of the gender equality status conducted in 2021, it was possible to identify the possible strengths and weaknesses concerning gender equality at ARI. This allowed the development of clear objectives and a set of targeted measures, with specific priorities. Below a schematic of the proposed objectives and actions is illustrated, together with the outcomes of the second reporting period (2024).

AREA 1: Work life balance and organizational culture			
Obj. 1.1 Promoting reconciliation of career and family life			
Action	Targets and indicators	Task force	Priority
1.1.a Analysis of the possibility to provide childcare for children 0-5 years (e.g. during school suspension periods)	- Presentation analysis results - Nr employees which benefit from the measure over the total / year	BB (financial department, SG, (Academia Raetica))	End 2025
1.1.b Analysis of the possibility to provide more flexible (shared, discontinuous) parental leave	- Presentation analysis results - Nr parental leaves taken / years		
1.1.c Analysis of the possibility to provide family allowance for assisting people because of health conditions	- Presentation analysis results - Nr people whose care is supported from the measure / year		

<b>AREA 1: Work life balance and organizational culture</b>			
<b>Obj. 1.2 Continuing promoting alternative and flexible working arrangements</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Target and indicators</b>	<b>Task Force</b>	<b>Priority</b>
1.2.a Implementing flexible working arrangements, including remote working for limited and specific periods of time (e.g. school holidays, family member severe illness)	- Policy implemented - Nr employees which benefit from the policy over the total / year	BB	End 2025
<b>Obj. 1.3 Promoting use of inclusive language around the organization</b>			
1.3.a Active use and encouragement of inclusive language around ARI in relation to gender and other forms of identity and diversity	- Nr communications/emails/posts on social media using inclusive language over the total / year - Guidelines implemented	NDL (Communication Dpt.)	End 2025 and continuously

Due to staff changes and minor priority, the objectives and actions of Area 1 have been postponed to 2025.

<b>AREA 2: Gender balance in leadership and decision making</b>			
<b>Obj. 2.1 Supporting and promoting women in leadership positions</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Targets and indicators</b>	<b>Task force</b>	<b>Priority</b>
2.1.a Organizing presentation on career development by successful female researchers in the field	- Presentation given - 1 presentation / 2 years	GR, SG, MS, SZ	End 2023 and continuously
2.1.b Enhancing visibility of women in activities such as expert panels and public outreach	- Nr events presented by women speakers on the total of events / year	All	
2.1.c Providing talented women employees with leadership programs/workshops	- Nr woman employees participating to a workshop over the total per year - 1 course / 2 years	BB, NDL	
2.1.d Advertise job positions on specific websites	- Specific website(s) included in the standard website list for job posting - Nr job advertisement on these websites over the total / year	NDL	
2.1.e Implementing a dual career service to provide the partners of new members with advice and support service, to enable them to continue their career in Davos/CH	Nr people supported by the service over the total / year	BB (Academia Raetica)	End 2025

2.1.a Organizing presentation on career development by successful female researchers in the field.

On June 2024, the second edition of “*Inspiring female scientists from ARI network*” took place. In this edition, Professor Gerjo van Osch, principal investigator at the Department of Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine & Otorhinolaryngology, Erasmus University Medical Center, The Netherlands, shared her successful career path as a female scientist. She talked about the opportunities she encountered along her career journey and what and who motivated and guided her through these choices. More than sixty researchers, including twelve visiting students from the University of Bern, attended the event and actively participated in the discussion. This event contributed to fostering a more gender-diverse culture among careers in science for the next generations.

2.1.b Enhancing visibility of women in activities such as expert panels and public outreach.

Sibylle Grad was awarded the *Orthopaedic Research Society (ORS) 2024 Women’s Leadership Award*. This award is given every year to recognize a woman biologist, clinician, or engineer who, throughout her professional lifetime, has made significant contributions to the understanding of the musculoskeletal system and musculoskeletal diseases and injuries. The recipient will have also demonstrated outstanding leadership through service to the professional community and mentorship of colleagues and trainees.

2.1.c Providing talented women employees with leadership programs/workshops

Due to the low attendance of the “*Leadership skills for women in science*” workshop organised by Academia Raetica in 2023, no more courses of this type were organized in 2024.

2.1.d Advertise job positions on specific websites

See report year 1 (2023).

2.1.e Implementing a dual career service

The action was postponed to year 2025.

<b>AREA 3: Gender equality in recruitment and career progression</b>			
<b>Obj. 3.1 Raising awareness on gender issues at different levels</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Targets and indicators</b>	<b>Task force</b>	<b>Priority</b>
3.1.a Providing trainings on gender equality, diversity, inclusion for all employees	- 1 training / year (mandatory) - Nr attendees / training / year	BB, NDL	End 2023 and continuously
3.1.b Providing unconscious gender bias trainings for decision makers	- 1 training / 2 years (mandatory) - Nr attendees / training over the total / year	BB, NDL	
3.1.c At AO level: discussing with AO Executive Committee (AOEC) about the possibility of establishing an AO GEP targeting AO employees	Presentation given at AOEC	BB	
3.1.d Celebrating the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, on 11 February	1 Post/video/interview published on ARI social media / year	NDL, All	
<b>Obj. 3.2 Implementing an updated ARI career path</b>			
3.2.a Examining and adjusting the ARI career path for research staff:  - considering adjustment of criteria for part-time positions - accounting for the period of time for the achievements and the intensity of work - accounting for the career breaks without bias against those who chose not to take career breaks - evaluating non-traditional career paths - listing the assessment of soft skills as well as research outputs (which are undertaken but not written on the career path in detail) - ensuring that admin responsibilities and student supervision are transparent and valued	new career path implemented and disseminated	Dedicated working groups for:  - Non-collegiate/ service route  - collegiate service route  (see report year 1 for more details)	End 2023
3.2.b Listing the ARI career path for administrative staff	career path implemented	BB, CB	

### 3.1.a Providing trainings on gender equality, diversity, inclusion for all employees

On the International Women's Day, on March 2024, the AO Foundation organized the first AO-wide event related to DEIA topics. In the online session, Prof. Ilse Jonkers from the University of Leuven shared her experiences throughout her career as a female scientist.

### 3.1.b Providing unconscious gender bias trainings

In October 2023, ARI held its second unconscious gender bias workshop, led by Tatjana Topalovic, AO Access Senior Program Manager for Diversity, Inclusion, and Mentorship at the AO Foundation. While the first workshop in 2023 targeted line managers, this session involved a different group, including project leaders, senior postdocs, and senior technical staff. The attendance rate was 74.2%, similar to the previous session. The workshop was highly interactive, with participants engaging in small-group discussions on selected biases, encouraging reflection on personal attitudes and workplace diversity. Feedback was generally positive, with many participants valuing the opportunity for open dialogue and personal reflection. In June 2024, a follow-up “*Commitment to Change*” was shared with all attendees to reinforce the workshop’s impact and support continued progress.

### 3.1.c At AOEC level: discussing with AO Executive Committee (AOEC) about the possibility of establishing an AO GEP targeting AO employees

Inspired by the ARI experience, in 2024 the AOEC mandated HR to establish a similar initiative on DEIA topics called “Inclusive Excellence best practices and policies”. HR leads a voluntary, multidisciplinary group of employees from different departments, the Inclusive Excellence Focus Group. This group is responsible for initiating, managing, and implementing DEIA-related projects and initiatives. The established goals entail the following three key pillars: increase awareness, education, and policies and practices. The development of this AO-wide DEIA initiative stands out as one of the most significant achievements stemming from ARI’s GEP.

### 3.1.d Celebrating the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, on 11 February

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, a post on LinkedIn about “International Day of Women and Girls in Science”, was created. Based on the metrics, the post was successful in terms of generating visibility, engagement, and click-throughs on LinkedIn. The content resonated with the audience and prompted them to interact with it, which is a positive outcome for the LinkedIn presence and networking efforts.

### 3.2.a Examining and adjusting the ARI career path for research staff

#### 3.2.b Listing the ARI career path for administrative staff

The new ARI career path for both scientific and administrative ARI staff was introduced at the ARI General Meeting on 21.03.2024 and came into effect immediately. In its first year, the implementation of the new ARI career path resulted in 14 formal requests, 13 of which were approved. The data is presented without a gender breakdown to maintain individual

confidentiality, given the small number of requests. This approach ensures anonymity while still illustrating the overall impact of the new career path.

Table 2: Impact of the new career path.

Request type	Number of requests	Total
Workload reduction request	5	13
Workload increase request	1	
Change of function request	7	

These figures suggest a promising early uptake of the new system. Notably, workload reduction was exclusively requested by male staff, signaling that part-time work among men is becoming more accepted and desired. This shift indicates a broader cultural change at ARI toward normalizing flexible working arrangements.

AREA 4: Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment			
Obj. 4.1 Preventing chances of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment			
Action	Targets and indicators	Task force	Priority
4.1.a Implementing a code of conduct, clarifying whether relationships are (or are not) considered harassment	Policy implemented and disseminated	BB, EDB, NG, legal department	End 2024
4.1.b Implementing a reporting system for any form of discrimination	- Policy implemented - Nr people reporting / year		
4.1.c Implementing an investigation policy, victim support measures, disciplinary measures, educational programs	Policy implemented and widely known		

#### 4.1 Preventing chances of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

Since early 2024, the dedicated working group has been actively implementing the actions 4.1.a, 4.1.b, and 4.1.c. As part of this effort, the group wrote a policy on gender-based violence and harassment. With the parallel launch of the AO-wide DEIA initiative, this work was adapted by the Inclusive Excellence Focus Group and used as the foundation for the new Inclusive Excellence Policy. This represents a significant recognition of ARI's leadership in shaping inclusive practices across the AO Foundation.

This policy is intended to be a further specification of the principles set out in the AO Code of Ethics and Conduct and outlines the vision in more detail. It establishes the basis for future discussions and action and defines the terms discrimination, bias, and harassment, as well as

the different responsibilities and duties of care. It also explains the different channels available to report an incident, the steps and process following an incident report, and the possible consequences should a violation be identified. Lastly, it briefly touches upon the different initiatives and practices already in place to ensure a diverse and inclusive work environment, such as the talent acquisition process and the workplace accessibility projects. This new policy has been approved by the AO Executive Committee and came into effect on February 1, 2025.

<b>AREA 5: Integrating sex and/or ethnicity dimensions into research content</b>			
<b>Obj. 5.1 Raising awareness on the possibility of including sex aspect in research content</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Targets and indicators</b>	<b>Task force</b>	<b>Priority</b>
5.1.a At research level: organizing trainings on how to add the sex aspect into research content	- 1 training / year (mandatory for research staff) - Nr attendees per training over the total / year	EDB, MC, MH, SZ, NG, UB	End 2024 and continuously
<b>Obj. 5.2 Setting up standard procedures for integrating sex aspect into research content</b>			
5.2.a Establishing Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) ensuring that sex analysis is considered in the design and outputs of research, where appropriate	SOP(s) implemented	Same as above	End 2023
5.2.b Publishing papers and/or writing grant proposals including sex dimension	Nr papers published/grants written / year		End 2025 and continuously

#### 5.1.a Organizing trainings on how to add the sex and or ethnicity aspect into research content

In July 2024, Daniele Zuncheddu, a PhD student, delivered a presentation to staff members on his comparative study titled “*Sex Biases in Preclinical Research of Osteoarthritis and Intervertebral Disc Degeneration.*” The paper, currently in preparation and expected to be published in 2025, served as a practical example of how to design and conduct research that incorporates sex as a biological variable. The session, which had an attendance rate of 76.6% (92 participants out of 120 invited), provided valuable insight into applying these principles in ARI’s scientific work.

#### 5.2.a Establishing Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs)

See report year 1 (2023).

### 5.2.b Publishing papers and/or writing grant proposals including sex dimension

A comparative study titled “*Sex Biases in Preclinical Research of Osteoarthritis and Intervertebral Disc Degeneration*”, authored by Daniele Zuncheddu (PhD student), Sibylle Grad (Focus Area Leader), and other collaborators from the CARTHAGO project (Grant Agreement ID: 955335) is currently in preparation and targeted for publication in 2025. In addition, Fatemeh Safari, (Postdoc), secured a CHF 100,000 grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation for her project titled “*Deciphering Osteoclast-Chondrocyte Interactions in a Physioxic Organoid Model: Implications for Inflammatory Responses and Sexual Dimorphism*” (Grant Number 229034).

Together, the upcoming publication and the successfully funded grant demonstrate the growing integration of sex aspect in ARI research and validate the impact of the GEP’s objectives.

## **7. Conclusions**

The second year of the GEP implementation shows substantial progress toward gender equality while also highlighting areas that require continued attention. Key achievements include the increased acceptance and demand of part time working arrangements, improved awareness and capacity building around DEIA aspects, and the successful integration of sex perspectives into research content. However, gender disparities persist in leadership roles, where women remain underrepresented.

The survey confirmed continued interest in DEIA issues, and generally positive perceptions of ARI’s efforts. Most employees feel supported in achieving work-life balance and regard the organizational culture as inclusive. Yet, a few female respondents still perceive slightly fewer opportunities for advancement.

Significant progress was made in awareness and capacity building. ARI hosted an unconscious bias workshop and introduced a transparent career path. In research, the inclusion of the sex/ethnicity as variables is increasing, supported by internal workshops and a new project funded that emphasizes these aspects.

ARI’s leadership has influenced AO-wide policy development, with the establishment of the Inclusive Excellence Focus Group and the adoption of a new DEIA policy grounded in ARI’s work.

While some objectives, particularly in work-life balance, were postponed to 2025 due to minor priority, the overall trajectory is positive.

## 8. Bibliography

1. European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans*, 2021
2. Gleichstellungsstrategie 2030, April 2021
3. Gender Equality in Academia and Research GEAR tool step-by-step guide, October 20, 2022