



Research Institute Davos

Approved on 23.04.2026 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 3 (2025)



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1. Monitoring and reporting of the Gender Equality Plan

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 and 2024, reports ([link](#)) were carried out to evaluate progress and measure ongoing efforts. In 2025, a third report is here presented. This included:

- Allocation of resources
- Changes in the Gender Equality Working group (GEWG)
- Collection of sex-disaggregated data
- Implementation of the action plan

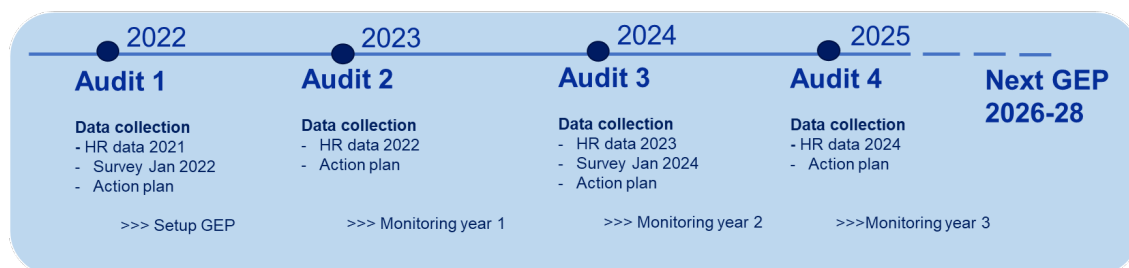


Figure 1: GEP 2023 – 2025.

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 GEWG composed of 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. Gender Equality Working Group

In 2025, the working group was reorganized due to staff changes (table 1).

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

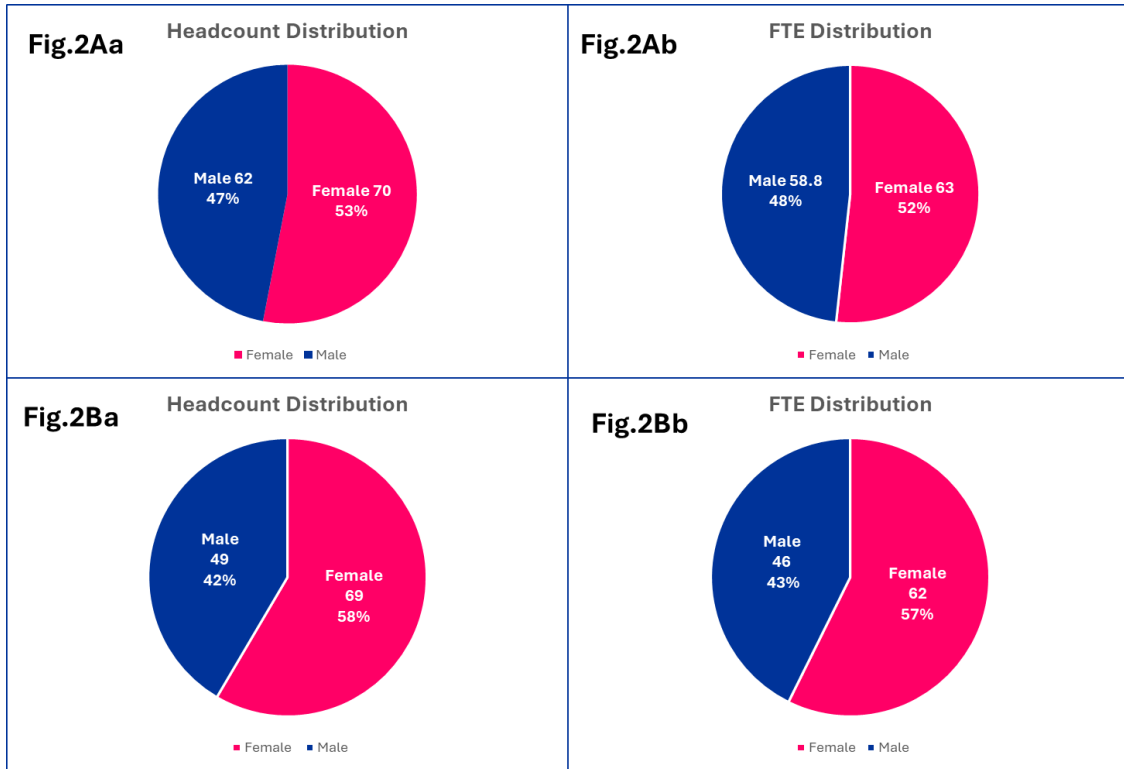
GEWG	Men	Women
Leadership	Geoff Richards (RIG) Director ARI & Executive Director AO Foundation (AOF) R&D Daniel Arens (ARD) Senior Project Leader	Nora Goudsouzian (GON) Program Deputy, Focus Area Leader Zhen Li (LIZ) Deputy Leader Focus Area
Administrative	Ulrich Bentz (BEU) Quality Management and Procurement	Nunzia Di Luise (DIN) Gender Equality Officer
Student/ researcher	Maximilian Heumann (HEM) PhD student	Carla Hetreau (HEC) Junior Project Leader Elena Della Bella (DBE) Senior Research Scientist Maria Hildebrand (HIM) Project Leader
Human Resources (HR)		Bettina Brühlmann (BRB) Senior HR Business Partner - AOF

4. Collection of sex-disaggregated data

The Human Resources (HR) team of the AO Foundation provided sex-disaggregated data across various aspects of the sex distribution within the Institute.

Sex distribution of ARI staff

On January 1st, 2024, the headcount distribution is very close, with males representing 47% and females 53% (figure 2A). On January 1st, 2025, this distribution remained largely stable (figure 2B), suggesting that ARI continues to maintain an equal sex representation in terms of the number of employees, which is a positive sign of inclusivity in the workforce. When considering Full Time Equivalent (FTEs) in 2024, the sex distribution remains balanced. Females represent 52% (63 FTEs) and males 48% (58.8 FTEs). The 2025 data show no significant deviation from this pattern, indicating that the balance is sustained. The close alignment between headcount and FTE figures suggests that working-time patterns are comparable across sexes, reinforcing overall equity in workforce participation.

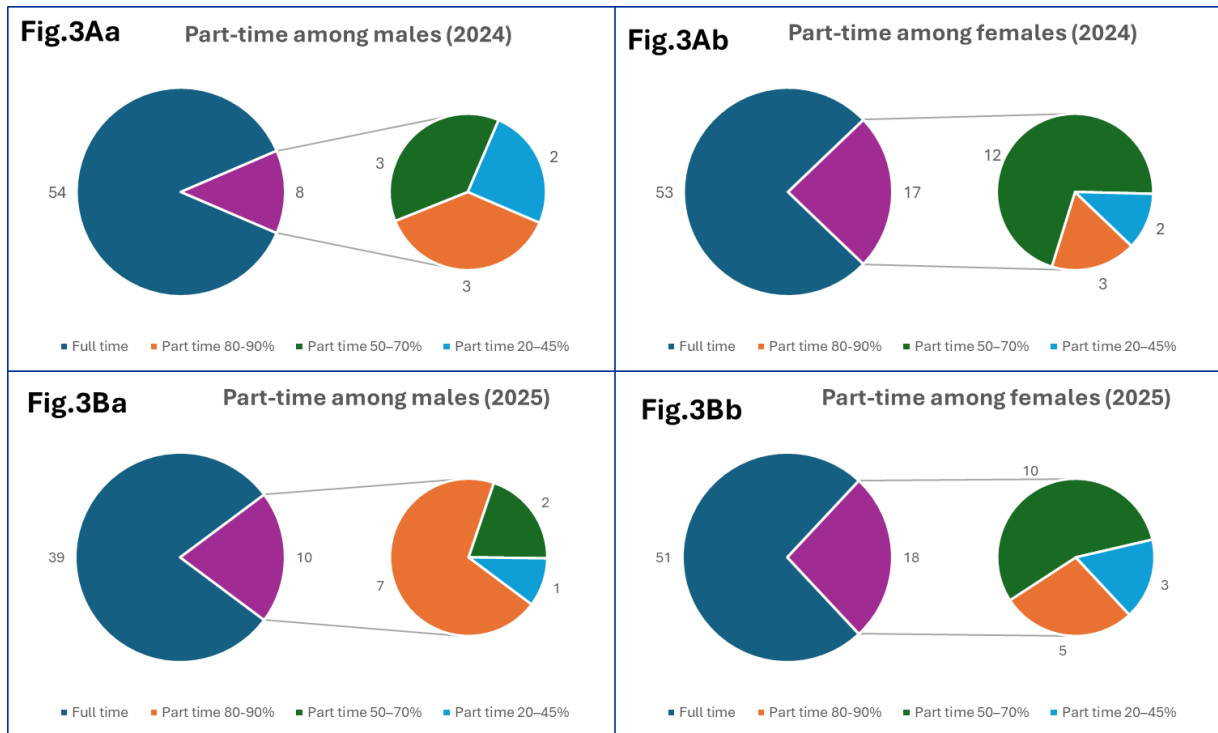


Figures 2A and 2B: Headcount and Full Time Equivalent (FTE) sex distributions.

Sex distribution across part-time

As of January 1st, 2024, 8 males (13% of the male workforce) and 17 females (24% of the female workforce) are working part-time. In total, there are 25 part-time positions, with 66.6% occupied by females and 33.3% by males (figures 3A and 3B). As of January 1st, 2025, the situation shows an increase in part-time positions. While females still hold the majority of part-time positions, it is noteworthy that there has been an increase in part-time positions among males, rising from 5 part-time males in 2021 (6.9% of the male workforce), 7 part-time males in 2023 (10.7%), 8 part-time males in 2024, to 10 part-time males in 2025.

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.



Figures 3A and 3B: Sex distribution across part-time.

Sex distribution across function classes

15 different function classes were categorized into 5 main groups: A) Guests, Guests extended, Externals; B) Apprentices, Interns, Postdocs, Students; C) Technical staff, Administrative staff, Senior Technical staff, (senior animal take carer, animal take carers, lab technicians), Senior administrative staff; D) Junior project managers, Project managers, Project coordinators; E) Executive managers, Middle managers, Senior project manager.

The results show that women are well-represented in almost all function classes (table 2). However, in higher decision-making roles (group E), their representation diminishes, accounting for only 22% (2024) and 28% (2025) of the positions (figure 4). This mirrors the situation in the European research system, where women are underrepresented in leading positions.

Table.2: Function classes distribution.

Year	Sex	Groups					Total
		A	B	C	D	E	
2024	Males	6	17	11	10	18	62
	Females	8	27	15	15	5	70
2025	Males	2	13	6	10	18	49
	Females	3	25	21	13	7	69

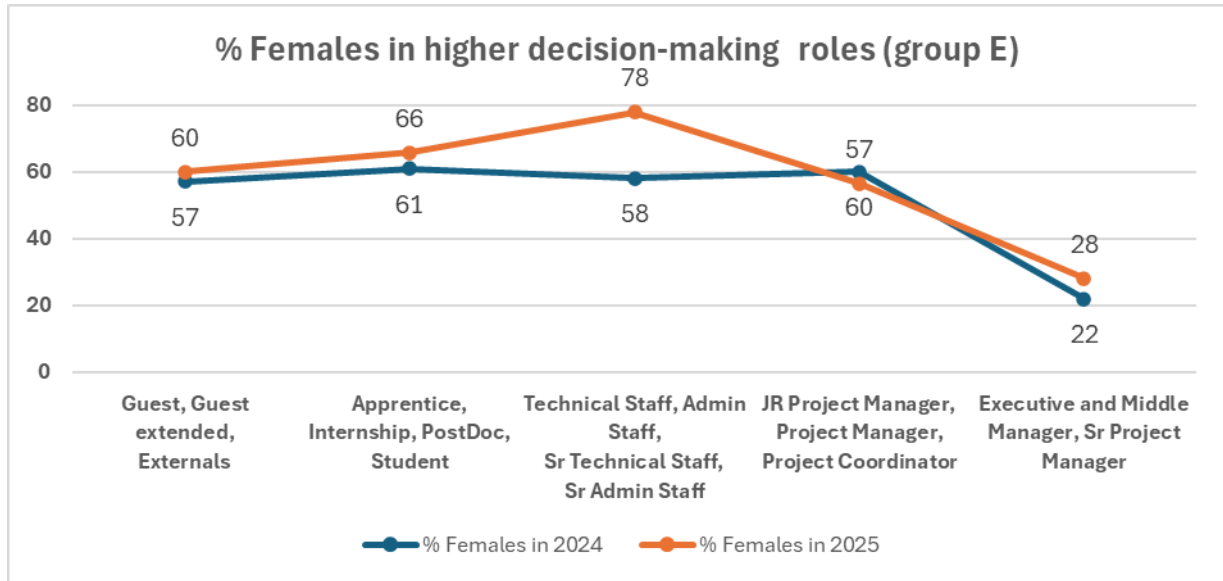


Figure 4: % Female in group E.

Sex distribution across type of contracts

Among the permanent contracts, there is no steady upward or downward trend. Among the temporary contracts, women prevail. The higher share of temporary contracts among women may reflect broader structural dynamics, such as career stage distribution and project-based funding.

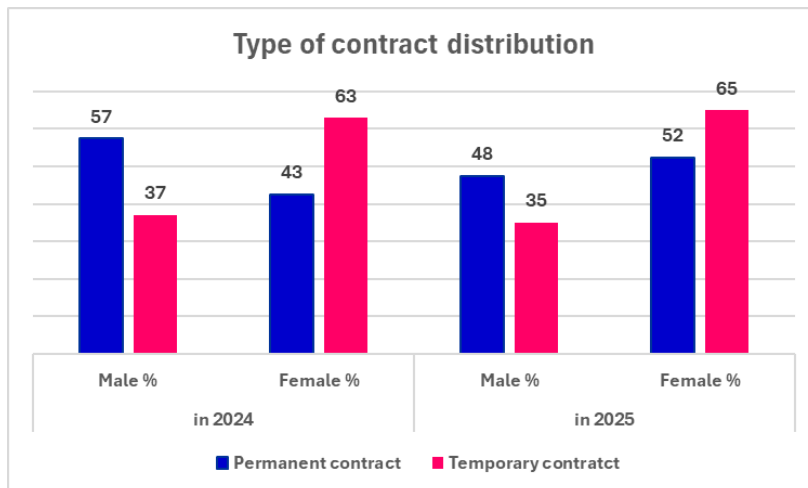


Figure: 5: Type of contract distribution.

5. 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 third reporting period (2025).

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 allowance 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	BRB (financial department, GRS, (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		
AREA 1: Work life balance and organizational culture			
Obj. 1.2 Continuing promoting alternative and flexible working arrangements			
Action	Target and indicators	Task Force	Priority
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	BRB	End 2025
Obj. 1.3 Promoting use of inclusive language around the organization			
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	DIN (Communication Dpt.)	End 2025 and continuously

1.1.a Analysis of the possibility to provide childcare allowance for children 0-5 years.

The two surveys conducted in 2021 and 2023, along with the 2023 survey on part-time work, showed no significant demand for a childcare allowance for children under the age of five.

Nevertheless, AO Foundation (AOF) employees are already entitled to the cantonal family allowance, which provides financial support for children up to the age of 16. Given the limited need identified and the existing external financial support, this action will not be pursued further in the next ARI GEP.

1.1.b Analysis of the possibility to provide more flexible parental leave.

The analysis indicated that implementing more flexible parental leave, for example in case of birth, would be possible. However, the implications of more flexible parental leave arrangements need to be further clarified and better understood. Moreover, any potential changes must be aligned with the AOF's overarching policy framework. Consequently, this action will undergo further assessment and will be considered for inclusion in the next ARI GEP.

1.1.c Analysis of the possibility to provide family allowance for assisting people because of health conditions.

As of action 1.1 a, the surveys indicated that there is no significant demand for family allowance to care for ill family members, and no financial contribution will be made to support this action. Nevertheless, since January 1, 2021, AOF provides to employees time-based support through paid leave. AO staff are entitled to time off work and continued payment of wages for the care of ill family members. The duration of leave is limited to a maximum of three days per incident. In addition, a maximum of ten days of (paid) leave may be taken within a service year to care for ill family members. Slightly different provisions apply to the care of sick children, as these days do not count towards the 10-day limit per year. Therefore, this measure addresses the need for flexibility and improved work-life balance without introducing additional financial allowances.

1.2.a Implementing flexible working arrangements, including remote working for limited and specific periods of time.

In May 2025, AOF introduced a new policy titled "*Working from abroad*" allowing employees to work remotely from outside Switzerland for a limited number of days per year. Given that ARI has a highly international workforce, this policy is particularly beneficial, as it enables employees to spend time abroad visiting families or supporting relatives with health-related needs. Since its introduction, three ARI staff members have already made use of this arrangement, indicating that the policy was well received and meets a concrete employee need, by offering additional flexibility and thus improving work-life balance.

1.3.a Active use and encouragement of inclusive language around ARI in relation to gender and other forms of identity and diversity.

To align and strength synergies with the AO-wide Inclusive Excellence Policy, the training on inclusive language will be organized centrally by AOF in the next few years and offered to all AO employees. As this topic will now be covered at AO level, the action will not be continued in the next ARI GEP.

AREA 2: Gender balance in leadership and decision making			
Obj. 2.1 Supporting and promoting women in leadership positions			
Action	Targets and indicators	Task force	Priority
2.1.a Organizing presentation on career development by successful female researchers in the field	- Presentation given - 1 presentation / 2 years	DIN, RIG, All	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	BRB, DIN	
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	DIN	
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	BRB (Academia Raetica)	End 2025

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

Two presentations of the series “*Inspiring female scientists from ARI network*” took place in 2023 and 2024, exceeding the planned target. Therefore, no presentation of this type was organized in 2025.

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

Sex disaggregated data were collected on participation in the AO Orthopaedic Research Summit 2025. The analysis shows that 61% of participants were males and 37% were females, with a

small remainder not specified (figure 6). Continued monitoring will be undertaken, though the ARI has no influence on who registers as participants for the conferences.

It is worth noting that ARI applies reduced participation fees (50% discount) for attendees from low- and middle-income countries, supporting broader inclusivity and equitable access to its scientific events.

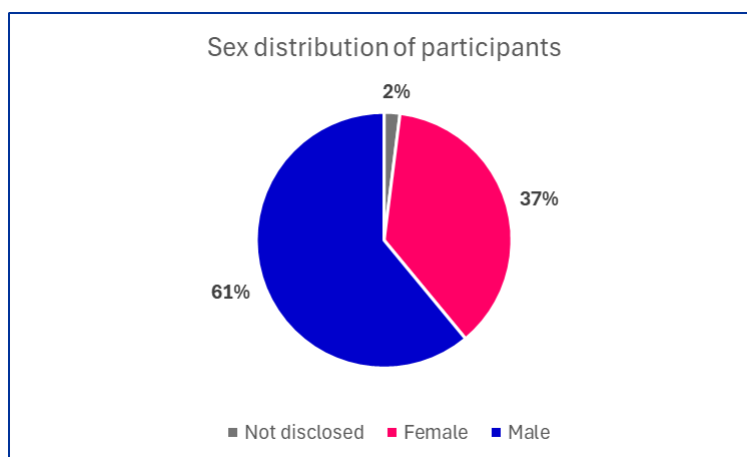


Figure 6: Participant distribution.

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 similar courses were offered. However, with the introduction of the AO training catalogue in 2024, participation in development opportunities slightly increased. In 2025, the self-leadership course in 2025 was attended by 4 ARI female staff members and no male participants, indicating a clear interest among women in strengthening their professional skills to enhance performance and manage future career challenges. In order to further increase the participation of ARI female staff members, the AO training catalogue will continue to be actively promoted to support continuous learning and development.

2.1.d Advertise job positions on specific websites

See report year 1 (2023).

2.1.e Implementing a dual career service

A detailed assessment showed that establishing a dual career service would require substantial resources and therefore it was decided not to pursue the implementation of an internal service at this stage. Instead, it could be possible to support Academia Raetica in implementing a system to collect job opportunities within the canton, which would benefit all institutes in the

region, including ARI. As a result, this action has not been implemented during the current GEP cycle and will be reconsidered for potential inclusion in the next plan.

AREA 3: Gender equality in recruitment and career progression			
Obj. 3.1 Raising awareness on gender issues at different levels			
Action	Targets and indicators	Task force	Priority
3.1.a Providing trainings on gender equality, diversity, inclusion for all employees	- 1 training / year (mandatory) - Nr attendees / training / year	BRB, DIN	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	BRB, DIN	
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	BRB	
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	DIN, All	
Obj. 3.2 Implementing an updated ARI career path			
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	BRB	

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

With the aim to increase awareness on DEIA topics, ARI and AOF co-organized and hosted the Diversity-gr event “*Diversity in Research and Beyond*” on 11 November 2025. The event brought together over 50 participants from ARI, AO and other research institutes and companies across the canton Graubünden. The program included two keynotes’ speakers, themed break-out discussion sessions and a plenary panel, followed by a networking apéro. The organizers received very positive feedback on the event and similar events are planned to be organized in the future.

With the same objective of strengthening awareness and capacity in DEIA topics, ARI and AO Access jointly organized a dedicated workshop at the AO Orthopaedic Research Summit 2025 titled: “*Practical skills for promoting allyship and supporting a positive workplace culture*”. The session focused on the role of mentorship and inclusive leadership in advancing research careers and fostering research excellence. The workshop was designed for both researchers looking to grow leadership and mentorship capacity and team leaders or principal investigators expanding their team. The workshop brought together over 30 participants, including two recognized team leaders that shared their experiences in mentoring research careers.

In addition, a lecture entitled “*Gender Equality in Research - ARI Gender Equality Plan*” was delivered within the framework of the European project *Baltic Biomaterials Center of Excellence* at Riga Technical University, Latvia. This presentation further contributed to fostering dialogue on gender equality in an international academic environment and strengthened ARI’s visibility as an institution committed to advancing DEIA practices.

3.1.b Providing unconscious gender bias trainings

The objective of organizing one unconscious gender bias training every two years was successfully exceeded. In fact, two trainings were delivered in 2023 and 2024, reaching a total of more than 50 participants, including ARI members in leadership position as well as younger project and team leaders.

3.1.c At AOF 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*”. 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

The AO communication department published a social media post on LinkedIn about “*International Day of Women and Girls in Science*”. Based on the metrics, the organic post (no payment to LinkedIn) 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 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 updated in March 2024 and entered into force immediately.

In its first year of implementation (2024), the newly updated ARI career path resulted in 13 formal requests that were afterward approved. In the second year of implementation (2025), a further 13 formal requests were submitted and approved. Notably, 5 out of 13 requests in 2024 and 10 out of 13 requests in 2025 correspond to promotions, highlighting ARI’s commitment to supporting career progression and advancement.

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.

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	BRB, DBE, GON, 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

The objective was successfully achieved. Initiated by the ARI GEWG in 2024, the work was further developed and implemented by the AO Inclusive Excellence Focus Group, resulting in the creation of the new AO Inclusive Excellence Policy. The policy was formally approved by

the AO Executive Committee and entered into force on February 1, 2025. Refer to previous report 2024 for more details.

AREA 5: Integrating sex and/or ethnicity dimensions into research content			
Obj. 5.1 Raising awareness on the possibility of including sex aspect in research content			
Action	Targets and indicators	Task force	Priority
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	DBE, HEC, HEM, NOA, BEU	End 2024 and continuously
Obj. 5.2 Setting up standard procedures for integrating sex aspect into research content			
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

No trainings with the goal of raising awareness on sex aspect into research content were organized in 2025. Therefore, annual trainings will be reconsidered as inclusion in the next plan.

5.2.a Establishing Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs)

The new SOP “*Sex and Gender Equality in Research and Development*” was introduced and disseminated across the Institute in 2024. In order to ensure that the SOP will be implemented consistently, annual trainings will be integrated into the next plan to guarantee that all employees are regularly informed and equipped to apply the principles.

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

A comparative study:” *Zuncheddu D, Buedo P, Stoddart MJ, Creemers LB, Grad S, Waligora M. Biological Sex Is Under-Reported in Cartilage-Related Preclinical Research: A Cross-Sectional Analysis. JOR Spine. 2025 Aug 18;8(3):e70104. doi: 10.1002/jsp2.70104. PMID: 40831693; PMCID: PMC12358802*” was published in 2025, representing the first ARI paper on sex studies. In addition, a project titled: “*Disc-Overy: A whole intervertebral disc model to unravel the*

interplay of mechanical, biological and inflammatory stimuli in disc degeneration” was granted to ARI in 2025 and includes sex-based analyses of intervertebral disc diseases.

Together, the publication and the grant demonstrate the growing integration of sex aspect in ARI research and validate the impact of the plan.

6. Conclusions

The third and final year of the ARI Gender Equality Plan 2023-2025 demonstrates steady and meaningful progress in strengthening DEIA aspects across the Institute. The initiatives implemented during this reporting period confirm ARI’s long-term commitment and highlight both achievements and areas requiring renewed attention.

Significant advancements were made in awareness-raising and capacity-building activities. Throughout 2025, ARI hosted DEIA focused events, which further engaged a broad audience and contributed to fostering dialogue on DEIA in international academic and business-oriented environments, strengthening ARI’s visibility as an institution committed to advancing DEIA practices.

Career progression also remains an area of strong advancement. The second year of implementation of the revised ARI career path confirmed its positive impact, with sustained uptake and a high number of approved promotion requests. This demonstrates that the revised system is effectively supporting transparent pathways for advancement for both scientific and administrative staff.

Similarly, the integration of sex dimension into research content continued to evolve, evidenced by a newly funded research project incorporating sex-disaggregated studies.

Nonetheless, the report identifies persistent challenges that remain central to future planning. Women continue to be underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles. These disparities highlight the need for further targeted interventions that strengthen visibility, equitable access to leadership opportunities, and balanced representation in scientific activities.

In the area of work–life balance, some actions—particularly those requiring AO Foundation alignment - were postponed due to lower priority or limited demand. However, the introduction of the policy on working from abroad illustrates the Institute’s commitment to supporting staff through flexible arrangements.

Overall, the trajectory of the ARI GEP is positive. The achievements of this reporting year confirm that sustained structural efforts, combined with partnerships at AO-wide level, continue to strengthen an inclusive and equitable institutional environment.

7. Bibliography

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