



# GENDER EQUALITY PLAN (GEP)

2025-27

Short version

Department of Experimental Oncology  
European Institute of Oncology

## PREMISE

The Department of Experimental Oncology at the European Institute of Oncology (IEO) is deeply committed to fostering a culture of gender equality and inclusion throughout the organization. We believe that diversity is a cornerstone of excellence, and by creating an equitable environment for all, we enable our researchers and staff to thrive, fostering innovation and collaboration. Our commitment goes beyond mere compliance with regulations; it is a core value that we embed in all aspects of our work, from recruitment and professional development to leadership and decision-making processes.

As a member of EU-LIFE - Alliance of research institutes advocating for excellent research in Europe –we are proud to align with a community that shares our values of equality, diversity, and inclusion. EU-LIFE provides a platform for exchanging best practices, learning from fellow institutes, and collaborating on gender equality initiatives, which further strengthens our commitment.

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) represents a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts. It serves as a tool to update, strengthen, and sustain the progress achieved through the Horizon2020-funded LIBRA project, a groundbreaking initiative that aimed to improve gender equality across research institutions in Europe. Through this GEP, we will continue to build on the achievements of LIBRA, ensuring that the advancements in gender balance, inclusion, and the integration of sex and gender perspectives in research remain central to our mission. This plan will guide our future actions, supporting the continuous evolution of gender equality in science and ensuring that our organization remains a leader in promoting diversity, inclusion, and excellence in research.

*Milan, December 2024*

*Signature of the Director*

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## PROCEDURE

### THE DOCUMENT

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is a public document, which is available on the website of the Institute. It has been drafted starting from the baseline of the gender disaggregated data that are gathered by the institute and published annually in the sustainability report. It will be shared across the Research Center as part of a detailed communication plan, emphasizing the commitment to fostering a fair and inclusive culture. The plan will also underscore the importance of a diverse research environment as a key driver of creativity and innovation.

### RESOURCES

A group of staff members has been assigned to work on developing the GEP as part of their roles. The GEP Team – part of the “WoMen in science” program - will be responsible for supporting its rollout and monitoring progress, while the director will appoint coordinator(s) to manage related tasks. Certain topic experts have already been selected, and a dedicated budget will be set aside for training and building capacity.

### WOMEN IN SCIENCE PROGRAM

The mission of WoMen in Science Program is to promote equal opportunities for men and women at IEO and boost women’s advancement in scientific careers. Furthermore, we are developing tools to raise awareness of the importance of accounting for sex in biomedical research involving cells, tissues, organoids and animals.

The team has been assigned the task of drafting the present document and has identified the following areas of interventions:

- **AREA 1** – Recruitment
- **AREA 2** – Career development
- **AREA 3** – Work-life Balance
- **AREA 4** – Sex and gender dimension of research
- **AREA 5** – Anti-harassment policies
- **AREA 6** – Management

The composition of the team is:

- Susanna Chiocca – Director of the program and Principal Investigator (PI)
- Annalisa Ariesi – Head of Human Resources (HR)
- Tiziana Bonaldi – PI
- Luisa Lanfrancone - PI
- Sara Gandini – PI
- Greta Caprara – Postdoc
- Paolo Maugeri - Collaborator

# AREA 1. RECRUITMENT

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## ACTIONS

**1.1** Unbiased Job Descriptions; **1.2** Diverse Hiring Committees; **1.3** Structured Interview Process; **1.4** Blind Recruitment Processes; **1.5** Active Recruitment.

## OVERALL SUCCESS MEASURES

**Gender Representation in New Hires:** Reaching a target of 50% women in new research positions, where applicable, within 2-3 years.

**Progression of Underrepresented Groups:** Increased career progression and retention rates for underrepresented genders, as measured through internal surveys and HR data.

## Responsible

Director, Human Resources, Communication Department, WoMen in Science

## Action 1.1 Unbiased Job Descriptions

### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M30 (June 2027).

**M1-M6:** Review of the job descriptions and advertisements.

**M1-M12:** Measure of the diversity of the candidates who reach the interview stage.

**M6-M12:** Draft of recommendations for job descriptions.

**M6-M12:** Draft of a feedback form for applicants.

**M12-M24:** Application of the recommendations.

**M24-M30:** Comparing the data before and after the implementation of the recommendations.

## Action 1.2 Diverse Hiring Committees

### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (December 2027).

**M1-M36:** Constant monitoring of the committee composition.

**M1-M36:** Annual implementation of unconscious bias and diversity training.

**M1-M12:** Draft of a feedback form for assessing changes in hiring practices after completion of training.

### Action 1.3 Structured interview processes

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (December 2027).

**M1-M12:** Revision of the Recommended procedures for the selection process.

**M18-M24:** Monitoring of the outcomes and evaluation of revision of the procedures.

**M24-M36:** Revision (if needed) and monitoring.

### Action 1.4 Blind recruitment processes

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (December 2027).

**M1-M12:** Revision of the Recommended procedures for the selection process.

**M18-M24:** Monitoring of the outcomes and evaluation of revision of the procedures.

**M24-M36:** Revision (if needed) and monitoring.

### Action 1.5 Active recruitment

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (December 2027).

**M1-M12:** Review current collaborations and identification of new ones.

**M12-M36:** Monitoring the outcomes.

## AREA 2. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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### ACTIONS

**2.1** Mentorship Programs; **2.2** Leadership Training; **2.3** Research Funding and Grant Writing Support; **2.4** Annual Performance Reviews.

### OVERALL SUCCESS MEASURES

**Gender Representation in Senior Roles:** Achieve or exceed a target of 50% women in senior research or leadership positions within a specific timeframe (3-5 years).

**Perceived Fairness and Inclusion:** Conduct regular employee surveys to measure perceptions of fairness in career development opportunities and the overall inclusiveness of the institute's policies (target: 85%+ agreement on fairness and inclusivity).

### Responsible

Human Resources; Grants Office; WoMen in Science.

### Action 2.1 Mentorship programs

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M12:** Establish the structure and aims of a pilot mentorship program with a selected group of young researchers.

**M1-M12:** Explore, with EU-LIFE institutes, the possibility to establish a common mentorship program.

**M12-M24:** Implement the pilot program/EU-LIFE common program.

**M24-M30:** Collect feedbacks from participants and establish an institute-wide program.

**M30-M36:** Develop a tool for monitoring career progression of mentees.

### Action 2.2 Leadership training

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M12:** Establish the structure and aims of the training.

**M1-M12:** Explore, with EU-LIFE institutes, the possibility to establish a common training program.

**M12-M24:** Implement the pilot program/EU-LIFE common program.

**M24-M30:** Collect feedbacks from participants and establish an institute-wide program.

**M30-M36:** Develop a tool for monitoring the attainment of leadership positions.

### **Action 2.3 Research Funding and Grant Writing Support**

#### **Phasing**

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M12:** Establish the structure and aims of the program.

**M1-M12:** Explore, with EU-LIFE institutes, the possibility to establish a common training program.

**M12-M24:** Implement the pilot program/EU-LIFE common program.

**M24-M30:** Collect feedbacks from participants and establish an institute-wide program.

**M30-M36:** Develop a tool for collecting data disaggregated by gender and monitoring grant success rate and career impact.

### **Action 2.4 Annual Performance Review**

#### **Phasing**

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M12:** Develop a performance review system that incorporates career development discussions (e.g., design a new performance review process that includes career progression goals; develop guidelines for managers on identifying development needs equitably).

**M24:** Conduct a mid-point review of the new performance review system.

**M24-M36:** Embed the annual performance review process as a core aspect of the institute's culture.

## AREA 3. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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### ACTIONS

**3.1** Flexible working hours; **3.2** Parental leave; **3.3** Return-to-work programs; **3.4** Childcare support.

### OVERALL SUCCESS MEASURES

**Improved Work-Life Balance Perception:** Regular employee surveys show improved perceptions of work-life balance across genders (target: 80%+ positive feedback).

**Gender Parity in Work-Life Balance Policy Use:** Ensure that men and women, particularly in leadership positions, are using work-life balance policies equally (target: no significant gender disparity in policy usage).

**Retention and Career Progression:** Improved retention and career progression rates, especially for employees with caregiving responsibilities or those using work-life balance policies (target: no negative impact on retention or progression for users of these policies).

### Responsible

Director, Human Resources, WoMen in Science.

### Action 3.1 Flexible working hours

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M12:** Review of the current policies adopted for work-life balance and assessment of current employee satisfaction.

**M12-M18:** Drafting of new measures that could improve work-life balance.

**M18-M24:** Implementation.

**M24-36:** Monitoring of employee satisfaction after change and retention rate.

### Action 3.2 Parental leave

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M12:** Review of the current policies adopted for work-life balance and assessment of current employee satisfaction.

**M12-M18:** Drafting of new measures (if needed and feasible) that could improve parental leave options.

**M18-M24:** Implementation.

**M24-36:** Monitoring increased uptake among men and retention rate.

### Action 3.3 Return-to-Work Programs

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M6:** Conduct surveys and interviews with employees who have taken career breaks to identify key challenges and needs. Collaborate with HR to design tailored return-to-work programs, including on-ramping, part-time options, and re-skilling initiatives.

**M7-M12:** Implement a small-scale pilot of the return-to-work program with select employees who have recently taken career breaks. Monitor participation, gather initial feedback, and make adjustments as needed.

**M13-M24:** Expand the program institute-wide, including comprehensive communication and awareness efforts to ensure all employees are informed about the available options. Offer workshops to managers on how to support returning employees effectively.

**M24-36:** Conduct a full evaluation of the program.

### Action 3.4 Childcare support

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M8:** Conduct a thorough review of existing childcare policies and services. Survey employees to understand their childcare needs and challenges. Analyze the feasibility of on-site childcare or partnerships with local providers and explore possible subsidy options.

**M9-M14:** Design a comprehensive childcare support plan. Engage with potential providers and secure partnerships or develop internal infrastructure plans.

**M15-M24:** Roll out the new childcare support measures, including on-site facilities or subsidized childcare. Launch an internal communication campaign to raise awareness and encourage employees to take advantage of the new childcare services.

**M25-M36:** Monitor.

## AREA 4. SEX/GENDER IN RESEARCH

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### ACTIONS

**4.1** Training on SGR for young researchers; **4.2** Seminar and workshop series; **4.3** Engaging with funding bodies.

### OVERALL SUCCESS MEASURES

**Increased Integration of Sex and Gender in Research Projects:** Percentage of research projects that actively incorporate sex and gender analysis into their design, data collection, and reporting (target 70%).

**Increased Funding for Gender-inclusive Research:** Increase in external and internal research funding awarded to projects that include sex and gender dimensions (target 25%).

**Positive Feedback on Research Culture:** Feedback from researchers on the value and relevance of integrating sex and gender into research through surveys and interviews (target 80% positive feedback).

### Responsible

Teaching staff SEMM doctoral program, WoMen in Science, Grants Office.

### Action 4.1 Training on SGR for young researchers

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M36:** Annual delivery of the courses and monitoring.

### Action 4.2 Seminar and workshop series

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M6:** Identify key topics, experts, and potential speakers for the seminars and workshops.

**M7-M12:** Launch a pilot seminar or workshop targeting a small group of PIs and researchers to gather initial feedback.

**M13-M24:** Roll out the full series of seminars and workshops across the institute, offering sessions at regular intervals (e.g., biannually).

**M25-M36:** Continue delivering the seminar and workshop series, incorporating evolving trends and case studies in sex and gender research.

### **Action 4.3 Engaging with funding bodies**

#### **Phasing**

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M12:** Identify key regional and national funding bodies in molecular oncology and related fields, along with other research institutes that share a commitment to sex and gender analysis in research.

**M12-M24:** Host initial meetings with funding bodies and research institutes to formally establish the permanent working table, defining its goals, scope, and frequency of meetings.

**M24-M36:** Continue regular meetings of the permanent working table, engaging in joint advocacy efforts aimed at promoting sex and gender analysis in calls for proposals and funding policies.

## AREA 5. ANTI-HARASSMENT

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### ACTIONS

**5.1** Active bystander training; **5.2** Development of an anti-harassment policy at the institute.

### OVERALL SUCCESS MEASURES

**Cultural Shift:** Increased awareness and adoption of a zero-tolerance approach to harassment, reflected in surveys of staff satisfaction and workplace culture (target: 80% of employees feel safer and more supported after policy implementation).

**Support Access:** 100% of employees have access to both the training (year one) and the policy guidelines (by the end of year two), with ongoing annual access to updated materials and training.

**Policy Effectiveness:** Regular evaluations and feedback from staff on the effectiveness of the anti-harassment policy, with annual reviews and updates as necessary.

### Responsible

Human resources, WoMen in Science.

### Action 5.1 Active bystander training (offered annually to all staff)

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M12:** Review the feedback of the previous years of training. Evaluate its impact on workplace behavior and identify areas for improvement.

**M12-24:** Launch the updated Active Bystander Training for the current year. The course will be mandatory for all staff.

**M24-M36:** Conduct a full review of the training's impact over the previous years, including the effects of the refresher modules. Adjust the course content as necessary to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

### Action 5.2 Development of anti-harassment policy

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M12:** Conduct a comprehensive review of existing anti-harassment policies from peer institutions, industry standards, and legal frameworks. Identify key components that should

be included in the institute's policy, such as definitions of harassment, reporting mechanisms, and disciplinary procedures.

**M12-20:** Draft the full anti-harassment policy, covering definitions of harassment, reporting and investigation procedures, confidentiality protections, and support mechanisms for victims.

**M20-M24:** Present the finalized policy to senior leadership for formal approval.

**M24-M36:** Establish clear reporting mechanisms, including anonymous reporting tools and a dedicated support system for those experiencing or witnessing harassment.

## AREA 6. MANAGEMENT

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### ACTIONS

**6.1** Follow-up self-evaluation through the “CASPER assessment tool”; **6.2** Regular collection of sex/gender disaggregated data.

### OVERALL SUCCESS MEASURES

**Institutional Performance:** Measurable improvements in gender equality outcomes based on regular evaluations and disaggregated data analysis.

**Action Plan Implementation:** Completion and tracking of action plans developed from the follow-up CASPER assessment, with 70-80% of planned actions achieved by the end of year three.

**Data-Driven Policies:** Evidence-based adjustments to institute policies and procedures, with 100% compliance in data collection and reporting by the second year.

### Responsible

Human resources, WoMen in Science.

### Action 6.1 Follow-up self-evaluation through CASPER

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M6:** Assemble a project team that includes representatives from various departments (e.g., HR, research, administration) to oversee the follow-up self-evaluation process.

**M7-18:** Administer the CASPER assessment tool; Analyze the data collected from the follow-up assessment to identify strengths, weaknesses, and trends in gender equality practices since the last assessment.

**M19-M36:** Based on the follow-up assessment findings, and the state of progress of the current GEP, develop an actionable improvement plan that addresses identified gaps and sets clear targets for the draft of the next GEP.

### Action 6.2 Regular collection of sex/gender disaggregated data

#### Phasing

Timeframe of the action: M1 (January 2025) – M36 (June 2027).

**M1-M6:** Form a dedicated team to oversee the data collection process, including representatives from HR, data management, and WoMen in science members.

**M7-18:** Implement a data collection system or software that allows for the systematic gathering of sex/gender disaggregated data across all relevant areas of the institute.

**M19-M30:** Begin regular collection of sex/gender disaggregated data according to the established framework, ensuring consistency and accuracy in data entry.

**M30-M36:** Compile an annual report summarizing the sex/gender disaggregated data collected over the year, highlighting key trends, challenges, and successes in gender equality efforts.