



Research Institute Davos

Approved on 08.04.2024 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 1 (2023)**

## Contents:

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Gender Equality strategy .....	4
2.1 Allocation of dedicated resources.....	4
2.2 Establishment of a gender equality working group .....	5
3. Assessment of the gender equality status quo.....	6
3.1 Collection of sex-disaggregated data .....	6
3.2 Survey on working percentage.....	10
4. Action plan and report year 1 (2023).....	14
5. Bibliography .....	21

## 1. Introduction

Gender Equality (GE) is a fundamental value of the European Union (EU) [1]. In 2021, Switzerland adopted the first National strategy for Gender Equality 2030 [2]. It is believed that GE benefits Research and Innovation (R&I) attracting and retaining more talents and ensuring that everyone can maximize their potential. In addition, according to the EU, there has been demonstrable progress toward GE in the European Research Area (ERA), but data shows that there is still significant work to be done in this area. The EU believes that GE goals can only be achieved through a structural approach to change across the whole European R&I system, entailing the joint commitment of R&I organisations, their funders and national authorities, and the EU [1].

Several EU policies and funding programmes aim to promote GE in R&I. In particular, Horizon Europe has strengthened the support for gender equality in R&I, through:

- A Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for public bodies, research organisations, and higher education establishments as new eligibility criterion for Horizon Europe funding;
- Integration of the sex dimension of research material (cell and tissues) and animals into R&I content as a requirement by default and an award criterion evaluated under the excellence criterion;
- Increasing gender balance throughout the programme, with a target of 50% women in Horizon Europe-related boards, expert groups and evaluation committees, and gender balance among research teams set as a ranking criterion for proposals with the same score.

The introduction of the GEP eligibility criterion aims to support these efforts, reflecting the Horizon Europe legal basis, which strengthens GE as a cross-cutting priority.

## 2. Gender equality strategy

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, as well as provide basis for corrective actions. In order to meet this requirement, regular meetings will be organized: 3-4 meetings per year with the whole Gender Equality Working Group (GEWG) and task forces meetings in between to discuss specific objectives and measures. There will be data collection, followed by analysis, reviewing, and reporting. Datasets on gender distribution will be collected on annual basis, while surveys will be conducted every two years. In addition, the ARI annual activity report, publicly available on the AO Foundation (AOF) website, will include a new dedicated section on the gender equality initiative and will publish the annual progress.



Figure 1: GEP 2023 – 2025.

### 2.1 Allocation of dedicated resources

The Horizon Europe criterion requires that the GEP has dedicated resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan. ARI has considered the type and volume of resources required to implement the GEP and has allocated the following resources:

1. A dedicated ARI gender equality function composed by one gender equality officer, a team with different expertise, including one human resource representative, and an executive leadership member (Director of the Institute), publicly supporting the whole function (see section 2.2 for more details).
2. Earmark staff time for the whole ARI gender equality function to work throughout the whole GEP cycle.

Earmark budget to support specific measures and areas of the GEP, such as work life balance, as well as staff training and development will be evaluated and potentially allocated in the next few years.

## 2.2 Establishment of a gender equality working group

In January 2022, ARI appointed an internal Gender Equality Working Group (GEWG) to conduct the gender equality data analysis within the Institute, draft a GEP, implement the plan as well as monitor its implementation. The GEWG has been composed in line with the recommendations of the Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans [1] and includes representatives of all major position groups, hierarchy levels, educational backgrounds, and genders from the Institute. Due to changes in the staff, the composition of the working group has changed comparing with the initial group. The GEWG at ARI currently includes:

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

GEWG	Men	Women
<b>Leadership</b>	Geoff Richards (GR) Director ARI & Executive Director AOF R&D Martin Stoddart (MS) Program Leader, Focus Area Leader Stephan Zeiter (SZ) Program Manager, Focus Area Leader	Nora Goudsouzian (NG) Program Deputy, Focus Area Leader Sibylle Grad (SG) Program Deputy, Focus Area Leader Claudia Barblan (CB) Manager Administrative Service
<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) Research Scientist Maria Hildebrand (MH) Project Leader
<b>Human Resources (HR)</b>		Bettina Brühlmann (BB) Senior HR Business Partner - AOF

In addition to the members listed in table 1, Peter Varga, Manuela Ernst, Zhen Li and Jan Buschbaum, were identified as additional members for the implementation of specific measures.

### **3. Assessment of the gender equality status quo**

In order to develop an effective GEP, the gender equality status quo of the Institute was established. The specific methodological approaches used to carry out the initial assessment were:

- a) Identify and review existing measures promoting gender equality.
- b) Collection of sex-disaggregated data about ARI employees.
- c) ARI employee survey.

The initial assessment was conducted in 2021 and 2022. The results of the initial assessment were used as baseline for GEP 2023-2025 to set up clear objectives and a prioritized set of measures and are shown in the first version of the GEP 2023-2025 (<https://www.aofoundation.org/what-we-do/research-innovation/about/diversity-and-inclusion>). In 2023 a second assessment was conducted, including sex-disaggregated data collection covering different aspects of the sex equality distribution within the Institute and a survey on employee satisfaction with the individual working percentage.

#### **3.1 Collection of sex-disaggregated data**

The human resources team provided sex-disaggregated data covering different aspects of the sex distribution within the Institute.

##### Sex distribution of ARI employees

The sex distribution of ARI employees is well balanced; on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, 68 men (54%) and 59 women (46%) worked at ARI (figure 1).

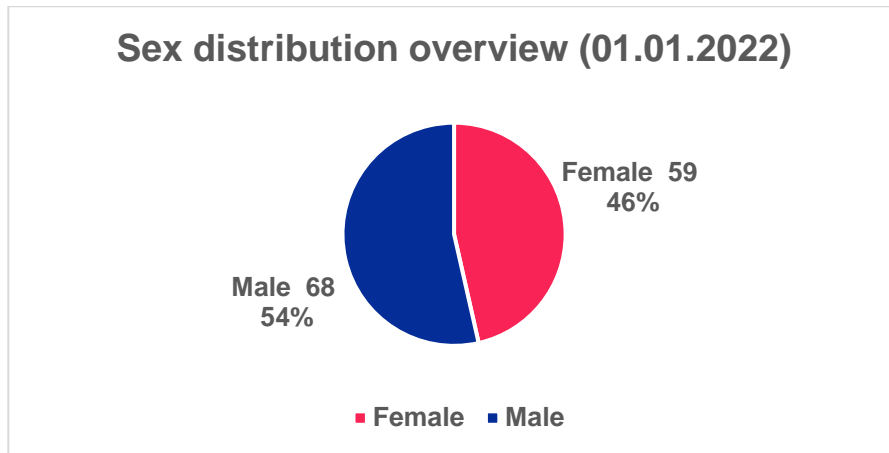
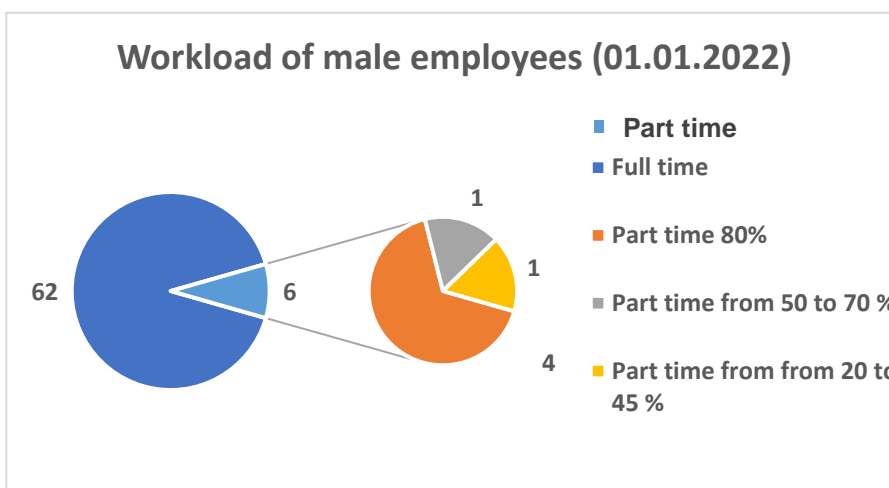


Figure 1: sex distribution of ARI employees.

Sex distribution of ARI employees across workloads

The sex distribution among ARI employees per workload shows a different situation: on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, 6 men (9% of the total number of men) and 14 women (24% of the total number of women) worked part-time (figure 2). On the total number of part-time positions (6+14), 70% were occupied by women while only 30% by men. These data showed that, while the overall sex distribution among employees is well balanced, sex distribution among part time positions is more prevalent among women employees. No significant changes are observed compared to 2021.



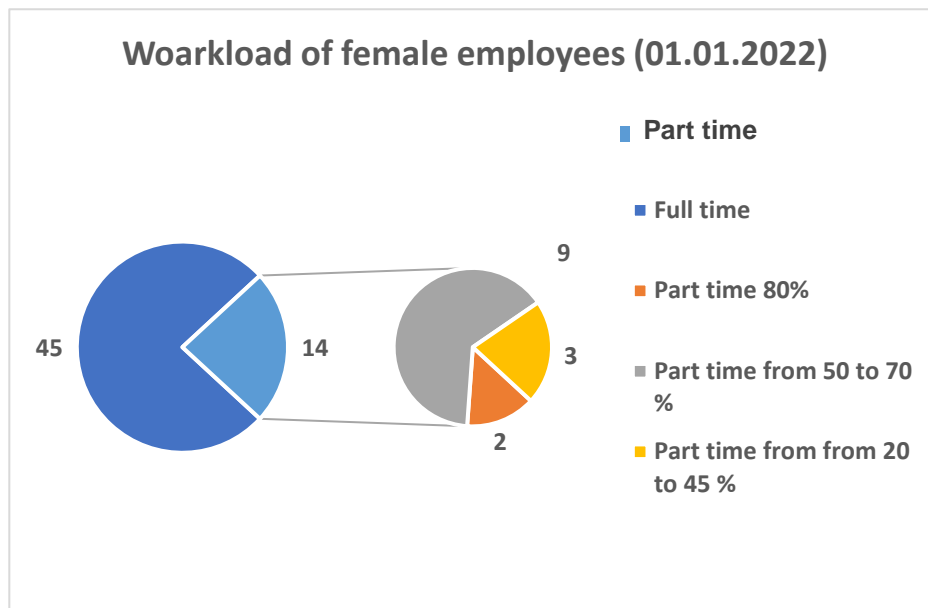


Figure 2: Sex distribution of ARI employees across workloads.

### Sex distribution of ARI employees across function classes

Further analysis of sex distribution of ARI employees across different function classes was conducted. 15 different function classes were categorized into 5 main groups: 1) apprentices, interns, postdocs, and students; 2) guests and extended guests; 3) senior technical staff and technical staff (senior animal take carer, animal take carers, lab technicians); 4) junior project manager, project manager, project coordinator, senior admin staff; 5) executive and middle manager, senior project manager. The figure shows that women remain most underrepresented under category 5 (29%), where high decision-making roles are categorized and under category 3 (25%), representing (senior) technical staff.



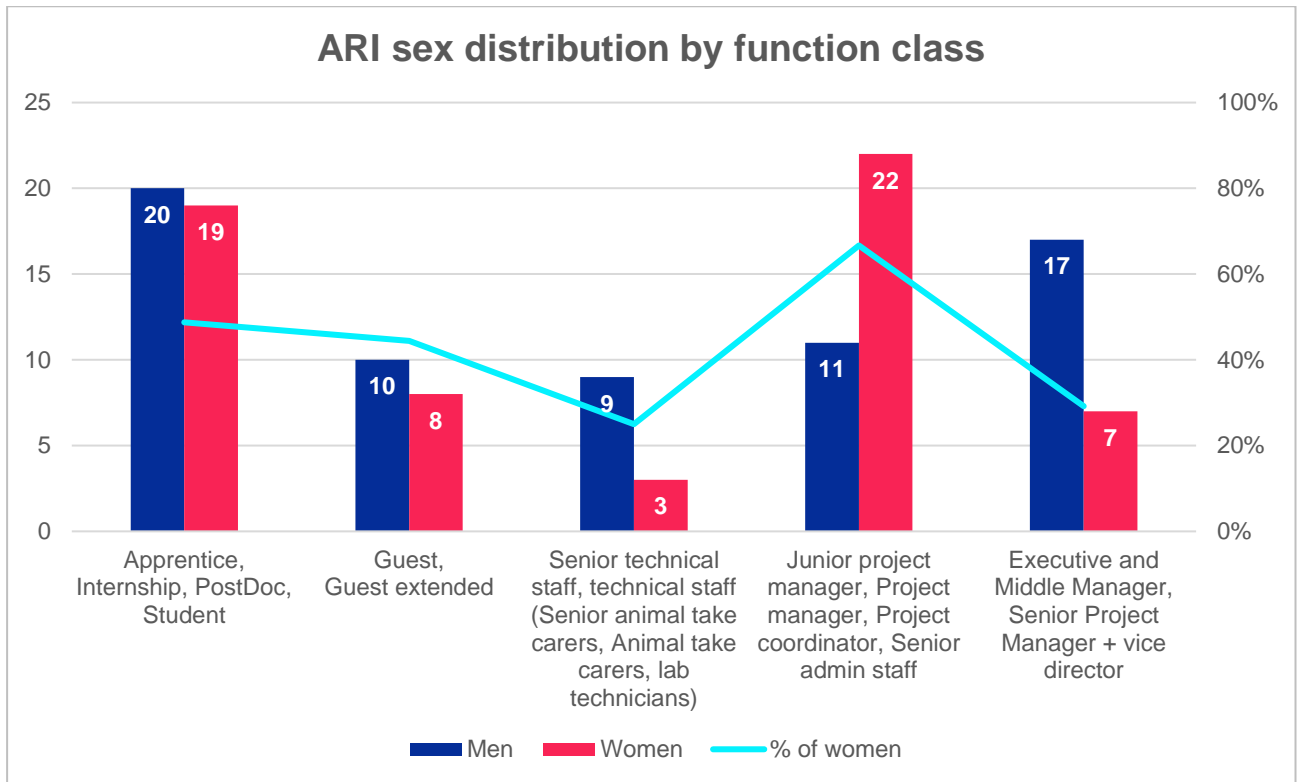


Figure 3: sex distribution of ARI employees across function classes.

Sex distribution of ARI employees across type of contracts

Figure 4 shows the sex distribution of ARI employee’s contracts across types of contracts: male employees (49% temporary and 51% permanent) and female employees (54% temporary to 46% permanent).

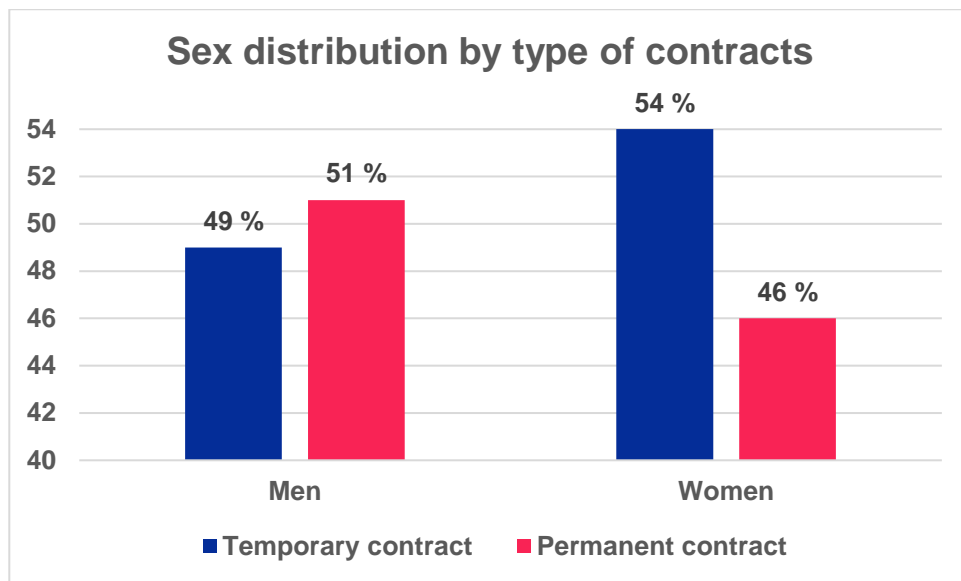


Figure 4: sex distribution of ARI employees across types of contracts.

### 3.2 Survey on working percentage

This survey was conceived to provide additional information on the numerical data on gender distribution of part-time work which showed a distinct bias with more women working part-time than men. The aim was to inquire whether employees are satisfied with their working percentage, what would be the ARI-internal or -external reason if satisfaction would be low and whether there is a significant gender difference in those factors. The survey was prepared in Microsoft Forms and distributed to all ARI employees on 25.10.2023 with time to answer until 1.11.2023. All answers were anonymous, and data was only presented in aggregated form so it could not be traced back to respondents. The following questions were asked:

1. What best describes your gender?
2. Are you working your desired working percentage?
3. Why are you not working your desired working percentage? (Multiple choice)
4. Do you want to add something to the previous question or share other thoughts on the topic?

Out of 130 people addressed with this survey, 98 people responded (75%) with an even distribution between genders (47 female, 50 male, 1 undisclosed).

Out of the respondents, 75 people were satisfied with their current working situation (16 satisfied with part-time, 59 satisfied with full-time). 20 people indicated wanting to work less and 3 persons want to work more (Figure 5).

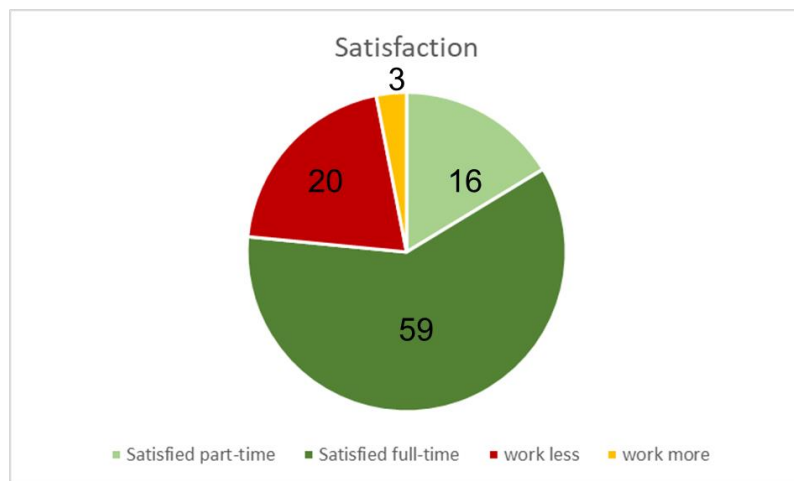


Figure 5: satisfaction with working percentage (male and female).

When looking at the satisfaction with current working percentage based on gender, there is no significant difference between male and female – absolute numbers as well as percentages are almost equal (figures 6 and 7). In general, satisfaction seems to be high with comparable results for both genders.

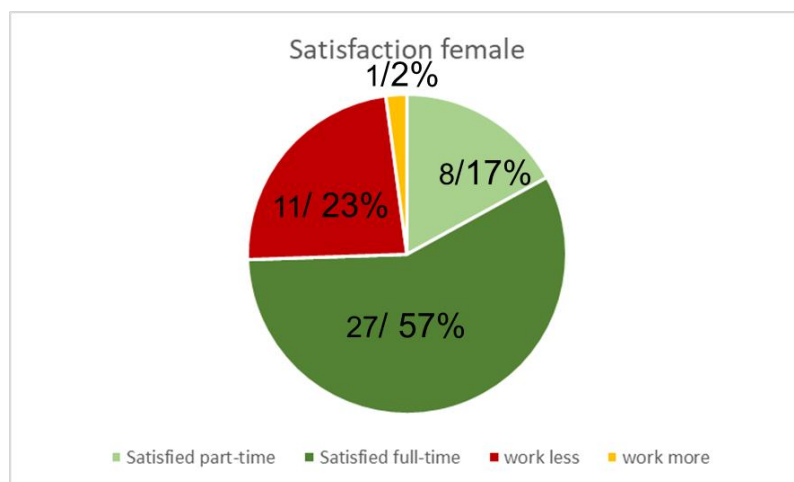


Figure 6: Satisfaction with working percentage (female).

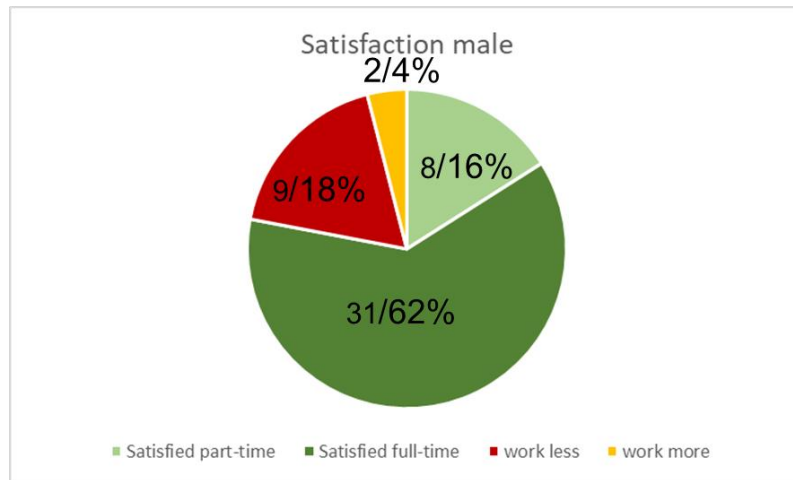


Figure 7: Satisfaction with working percentage (male).

When looking at reasons why people indicated that they were dissatisfied with their current working percentage and want to work less, there are also no obvious major gender differences. Most often, the income was given as a reason for not working less even though it is desired. The second most frequent answer was the feeling that the quality of work would decline when working part-time. In third place, different reasons such as the feeling of getting fewer interesting tasks and responsibilities, fear of hindering one's scientific career as well as not being granted a diminished working percentage by the superior were given. This is of interest as everybody up to the position of Program Leader should be able to reduce working percentage to a certain percentage in close communication with their line manager. Interestingly, reasons connected with familial obligations such as child- or elderly care were not frequently selected (figure 8). For the 3 people indicating they are dissatisfied with their current working percentage because they want to work more, two male respondents selected that they were not granted a change by the superior. The female respondent did not indicate a reason.

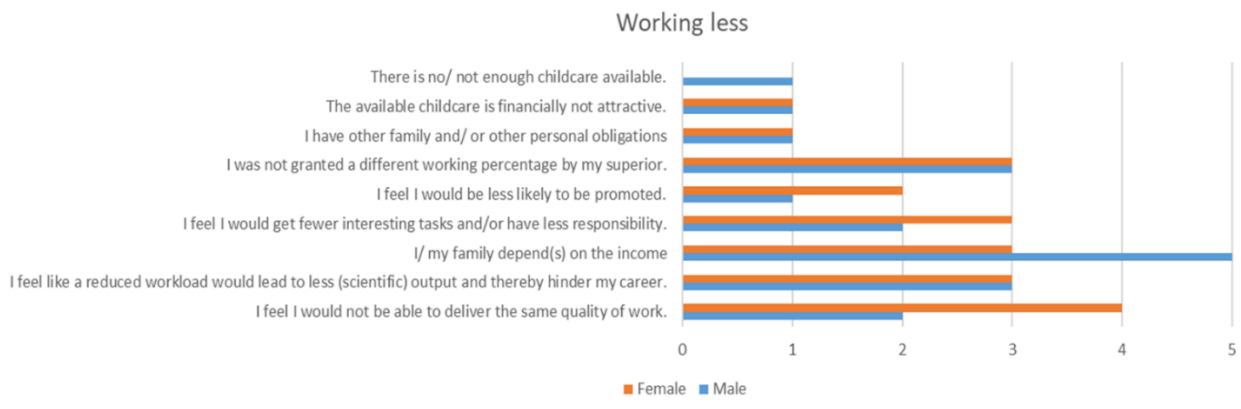


Figure 8: Reasons given for not working less although it is desired (female and male).

Approximately 20% of respondents left a comment in the last section (18 comments in 98 replies). Generally, four topics became evident: high expectations concerning working hours and commitment in ARI; satisfaction with the individual situation; a scientific career is also linked to time spent so part-time work might not be feasible; there are no clear rules regarding the application for part-time work.

Scientific careers are forged internationally, and therefore it is out of scope for a single institution to change the way careers are perceived and assessed in this community. However, it is within ARI's ability to grant employees a certain degree of flexibility when designing their own careers and work situations. Considering the data collected with this survey, most ARI employees are satisfied with their current working percentage. To address the comments on the lack of clear rules regarding application for part-time work as well as the people indicating that they were not granted a different working percentage by their superior, a sentence was introduced to the new career path document: Part-time work is possible up to Program Leader/Manager. Conditions will be established on a case-by-case basis. The results of this survey and the rules on applying for a reduction in working percentage were presented to ARI employees at the ARI Scientific and Information Meeting (SIM) on 14.02.2024. Since this meeting, 3 males have asked to decrease to 80% workload and 1 female to 90%, which have all been granted at Director level. 1 female requested to increase to 80% which was also granted at Director level (this addressed 5 of the 6 who mentioned they were not granted changes by their line manager). The updated policy allows employees who are rejected

by their line manager to discuss their wish to increase/decrease work time with their program leader / manager who has to discuss with the Director of the ARI.

#### 4. Action plan and report year 1 (2023)

Based on the results of the initial assessment of the gender equality status conducted in 2021 within ARI, 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 first reporting period (2023).

<b>AREA 1: Work life balance and organizational culture</b>			
<b>Objective 1.1 Promoting reconciliation of career and family life</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Targets and indicators</b>	<b>Task force</b>	<b>Priority</b>
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 per year	BB (financial department, SG, (Academia Raetica))	End 2024
1.1.b Analysis of the possibility to provide more flexible (shared, discontinuous) parental leave.	- Presentation analysis results - Nr parental leaves taken per 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 per year		
<b>Objective 1.2 Continuing promoting alternative and flexible working arrangements</b>			
1.2.a Implementing more 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 per year	BB	End 2024
<b>Objective 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 per year - Guidelines implemented	NDL (Communication Dpt.)	End 2025 and continuously

Due to staff changes, the objectives of Area 1 have been postponed to years 2024 and 2025.

<b>AREA 2: Gender balance in leadership and decision making</b>			
<b>Objective 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 every 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 over 1 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 every 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 per 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 per year	BB (Academia Raetica)	

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

On November 2023, the first edition of “*Inspiring female scientists from ARI network*” took place. In this edition, Prof. Ilse Jonkers - iSi Health Director – KU Leuven Institute for Physics-Based Modeling for In Silico Health, Belgium – shared her successful career journey as a female scientist, what motivates her, what her values are, and how she has overcome obstacles. This initiative aims to connect early-stage female researchers to successful female scientists, to inspire and motivate them to continue their careers in science, and to build a professional and mentoring network of peers.

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

In 2023, Prof Gerjo Van Osch, Vice Dean of Research Erasmus, Rotterdam, Netherlands, was appointed as a new member of the ARI Advisory Committee (ARI AC), becoming the first woman to be appointed to the ARI AC. Also, the 2023 edition of the annual ARI eCM conference was organized by Martin Stoddart, Program Leader of ARI's Regenerative Orthopaedics Programme, as well as by Esther Wehrle and Sophie Verrier from ARI's Bone Biology Focus Area team, though both males and females have been co-organising eCM conferences since 2010.

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

A 2-day workshop “Leadership skills for women in science” was organised by Academia Raetica on 15-16 June 2023. Although the course was well advertised in advance, only 4 female ARI employees attended the course, out of approximately 77 female employees. This low attendance could be because they were too busy with their schedule, they felt the course was designed for more senior roles, they felt the title was discriminatory or they weren't interested in leading positions. The alternate opinion that was mentioned by the Director of PMOD in Davos (Prof Louise Harra) was that women do not want to attend leadership skills courses which are only open to women, and she even finds such courses insulting as opposed to courses being open to everyone.

#### 2.1.d Advertise job positions on specific websites.

A list of job posting websites specifically for women in science, including costs, was compiled and proposed to HR to be included in the standard list of websites for AO vacancies. After a careful review, it was estimated that approximately 90% of ARI positions are filled by internal or external well-known researchers from the ARI network. In addition, there is always a good gender balance in the applicant pool, and therefore there is no need for advertising on more specific websites.

#### 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

The action was postponed to year 2024.



<b>AREA 3: Gender equality in recruitment and career progression</b>			
<b>Objective 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 per year (mandatory) - Nr attendees per training per year	BB, NDL	End 2023 and continuously
3.1.b Providing unconscious gender bias trainings for decision makers	- 1 training every 2 years (mandatory) - Nr attendees per training over the total per year	BB, NDL	
3.1.c At AO level: discussing with AO Executive Committee 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 per year	NDL, All	
<b>Objective 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	Non-collegiate/ service route: SZ, ME, NDL, BB  Collegiate route: SG, MST, PV, ZL	End 2023
3.2.b Listing the ARI career path for administrative staff	career path implemented	BB, SW, CB	

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

On February and March 2023, 2 workshops (in English and German) held by Nunzia Di Luise, Judith Baumberger, Sonia Wahl and Geoff Richards took place for ARI staff (112 invited people, 15 absentees, 97 participants = 86.6 % attendance). Participants were

provided facts, evidence and arguments on various topics relating to gender equality to increase awareness and knowledge about gender (in)equality, with a focus on research and innovation.

### 3.1.b Providing unconscious gender bias trainings for decision makers.

On March 2023, a workshop held by Tatjana Topalovic – AO Access Senior Program Manager Diversity, Inclusion and Mentorship at AO Foundation and Nunzia Di Luise took place for ARI staff. Although the workshop was initially planned for people in leadership positions only, it was decided to make it open to all ARI staff. The attendance rate of the mandatory attendees (31) was 77.4% (24 mandatory + 5 optional). The workshops took the form of highly interactive discussions, with small groups discussing selected biases, giving them an opportunity to learn more about the subject and reflect on their own attitudes when it comes to diversity in the workplace. Also, a follow-up «Commitment to change» was sent out to all attendees in June 2023.

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

On November 13th, 2023, the ARI Gender Equality Plan was presented at the HR leading meeting. As a result of this meeting, the AOEC approved a Diversity Equality & Inclusion (DE&I) initiative for all AO employees and Bettina Brühlmann will be leading it.

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

On February 11<sup>th</sup> 2023, 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.

In order to update the career path for research ARI staff, two internal working groups, one for the academic career (including Martin Stoddart - Program Leader, Sibylle Grad – Focus Area Leader, Zhen Li - Senior Research Scientist, Peter Varga - Focus Area

Leader) and one for the support service (including Manuela Ernst - Senior Project Leader, Nunzia Di Luise – Gender Equality Officer, Jan Buschbaum - Focus Area Leader, Stephan Zeiter - Program Leader) were identified for the implementation of the specific action. After several internal discussions, a revised ARI career path was released, including a newly established point-based system for career progression, guidelines for part time jobs, and a promotion application form to apply for internal advancements. The updated ARI career path for research staff was presented to the ARI staff at the ARI General Meeting on 21.03.2024.

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

The ARI career path for administrative staff is still in progress and will be finalized by the first quarter of 2024.

<b>AREA 4: Measures against gender-based violence (verbal / physical), including sexual harassment</b>			
<b>Objective 4.1 Preventing chances of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Targets and indicators</b>	<b>Task force</b>	<b>Priority</b>
4.1.a Implementing a code of conduct, clarifying whether relationships are (or are not) considered harassment	Policy implemented and widely known	BB, EDB, NG, legal department	End 2024
4.1.b Implementing a reporting system for any form of discrimination	- Policy implemented - Nr people reporting over 1 year		
4.1.c Implementing an investigation policy, victim support measures, disciplinary measures, educational programs.	Policy implemented and widely known		

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

Due to the very delicate nature of the topic and staff changes in the HR team, the objective 4.1 was postponed until 2024, to allow the necessary time for reflection and exchange.

<b>AREA 5: Integrating sex dimension into research content</b>			
<b>Objective 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 per year (mandatory for research staff) - Nr attendees per training over the total per year	EDB, MC, MH, SZ, NG, UB	End 2024 and continuousl y
<b>Objective 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 per year		End 2025 and continuousl y

5.2.a Establishing Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) ensuring that sex analysis is considered in the design and outputs of research.

The actions of the objective 5.2 were reorganized and merged into two actions, 5.2.a (also anticipated to 2023) and 5.2.b. The working group released a new SOP with detailed guidelines for researchers on how to incorporate sex analysis into the research work. The SOP was presented to ARI staff at the ARI SIM meeting on 14.02.2024 and widely disseminated through the ARI.

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

The action 5.2.b was achieved earlier than planned. A comparative study paper investigating “*Sex biases in preclinical research of osteoarthritis and intervertebral disc degeneration*”, by Daniele Zuncheddu – PhD student, Sibylle Grad – Focus Area Leader, and other members of the CARTHAGO ITN EU project (Grant agreement ID: 955335), is in preparation with the aim to be published in 2024. Also, four Horizon Europe proposals were submitted in 2023, addressing the sex and gender dimensions of the research.

## 7. 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