



ICHF

Institute of Physical Chemistry PAS

Gender Equality Plan

for the Institute of Physical Chemistry, Polish Academy of Sciences

up to 31.05.2027 (extension)

Transitioning towards an Inclusive Gender Equality Plan

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List of abbreviations

GEP – Gender Equality Plan

IGEP – Inclusive Gender Equality Plan

ICChF PAN – Institute of Physical Chemistry, Polish Academy of Sciences

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation

EDI – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

GEAM – Gender Equality Audit and Monitoring

This document constitutes an updated version of the previous Gender Equality Plan. The transitional period was designed not only to review existing activities but, above all, to develop a more comprehensive diagnosis of the Institute's situation with regard to gender equality, diversity, and inclusion. As the timeframe originally foreseen for this work proved insufficient, additional time was required to gather further evidence, analyse institutional needs, and formulate well-grounded recommendations for future action.

The timeframe of the previous transition plan proved insufficient due to limited resource allocation, difficulties in establishing collaboration with external experts capable of conducting an analysis of the current situation, and a lack of internal expertise resulting from the institution's STEP profile.

The present updated version builds upon the previous plan and incorporates:

- The experience and insights gained by the IGEP Working Group during the implementation of the transitional plan;
- Extended statistical data covering 2025, together with additional indicators and datasets collected following decisions of the IGEP Working Group;
- Recommendations from the Report on Gender Equality and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GE/EDI) Developments at the Institute of Physical Chemistry, Polish Academy of Sciences, prepared by Ewa Krzaklewska, Paulina Sekuła, and Marta Warat. (Inspire report).

Following the example of the European Commission, the Institute of Physical Chemistry, Polish Academy of Sciences (IChF PAN) has aimed to promote a diverse, inclusive and equitable working environment through the enactment of its own Gender Equality Plan (GEP). During the implementation of the previous GEP (2022-2024), we observed that it was often difficult and counterproductive to focus solely on gender, as many actions taken to address gender imbalances would also be beneficial to other marginalised groups. For this reason, we have decided to transition towards an Inclusive Gender Equality Plan (IGEP), which will try to extend GEP values to those marginalised groups.

Current plan focuses on diagnosis of the Institute's situation with regard to gender equality, diversity, and inclusion and establishing a sustainable framework for evidence-based gender equality work at the Institute.

1. Dedicated resources

The implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the GEP rely on the collaboration of several institutional bodies, including:

- Administrative units responsible for data collection e.g., the Human Resources Department, the Secretary of the Doctoral School, Grant Department and other relevant administrative and decision-making units.
- Director and deputy directors
- other bodies working on tasks related to IGEP themes, including the HR Excellence in Research Group, Ombudspersons and representatives of the Anti-Discrimination Committee
- IGEP Working Group
- IGEP officer

The roles and responsibilities of the parties involved, as well as the associated decision-making arrangements, will be specified for each action included in the current GEP and in subsequent implementation plans.

Three main bodies dedicated to GEP implementation are as follows:

Director and deputy directors

The Director holds overall responsibility for the implementation, oversight, and strategic direction of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP). The Director ensures that actions undertaken by the various bodies working on issues related to gender equality, diversity, inclusion, and equal treatment, including the IGEP Working Group, HR Excellence in Research Group, Ombudspersons, and the Anti-Discrimination Committee, are aligned, mutually reinforcing, and make effective use of institutional resources.

The Director is responsible for:

- Appointing the IGEP Working Group and the IGEP Officer;
- Providing strategic oversight of GEP implementation and ensuring institutional commitment to the achievement of GEP objectives;
- Allocating the resources required for the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the GEP at the time of signing of each new plan, and securing additional resources during implementation where necessary;
- Approving annual reports developed by each of the IGEP Working Group members;
- Deciding on the recognition and, where applicable, remuneration of staff members undertaking substantial GEP-related responsibilities;
- Promoting GEP objectives and activities within the Institute through institutional communications, presentations, and participation in relevant meetings and assemblies;
- Ensuring that gender equality, diversity, and inclusion considerations are appropriately integrated into relevant institutional policies and procedures;
- Supporting cooperation and coordination among bodies working on issues related to the GEP and ensuring effective information exchange between them;

Organising and chairing the annual coordination meeting involving representatives of bodies working on GEP-related themes;

GEP/IGEP Working Group

Implementation of the IGEP will be conducted by a working group with the following incentives:

- internal motivation and ownership of the actions by members of the IGEP working group:
 - the members will need to apply to be part of the IGEP working group

- the members will actively participate in the preparation of the new plan (IGEP) and its tasks
- the members will choose the actions that they will carry out each year and write a report about the execution of these actions
- limited time allocated to specific activities (meetings, execution of tasks, training), which would allow for workloads to be shared more equally among working group members;
- external motivation - the annual effort of each working group member will be remunerated according to directors' decision based on the provided report.

During the interim period, the Director of IChF PAN set forth the organisation of a new working group consisting of at least 5 members, including the Chair. Two announcements for the working group positions were sent out to all IChF PAN employees.

Regulation No. 15.2025 of the Director of the Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences of 14 March 2025 established a new working group to support the implementation of the Inclusive Gender Equality Plan. The members of the group are: Emilia Witkowska Nery (Chair), Karina Kwapiszewska, Jacek Gregorowicz, Steven Linfield and Ariba Aziz.

The IGEP will be prepared until January 2027, giving the working group enough time to plan the tasks which will be pursued after this date.

Each member of the working group will devote 40 hours per year to the implementation of IGEP tasks, with an additional 10 hours for training on IGEP issues. Each person in the working group will choose their tasks for the following year and will be responsible for carrying them out. The whole group will meet 4 times a year to discuss the implementation of their tasks and any necessary changes to the plan.

Each January, each member will prepare a report on the tasks they carried out, which will form part of the final report on the implementation of the IGEP. The reports will be evaluated by the IChF's Director.

The IGEP workgroup will be responsible for:

- data analysis;
- preparation of GEP documents, including plans and reports;
- planning and development of the IGEP actions, including engagement of external experts if necessary.

The IGEP Working Group Chairperson is responsible for:

- Approving action outcomes completed by working group members, including the review and approval of reports prior to their submission to the Director.
- Organising and facilitating working group meetings.
- Allocating and distributing additional workload among members when such tasks have not been planned during the annual meeting.
- Identifying relevant training opportunities and external funding sources that could support the development and implementation of new GEP actions.

The Chairperson is not responsible for supervising, monitoring, or motivating members in the execution of their assigned tasks. The role does not carry managerial authority over working group members, nor does it include the ability to provide financial or other incentives. Previous assessments have demonstrated that assigning managerial responsibilities without the corresponding authority and resources is ineffective and tends to increase administrative burden and frustration without delivering the intended benefits.

IGEP officer

Experience gained during the transitional period has shown that the implementation of GEP activities requires dedicated staff capacity and cannot be effectively carried out solely as an additional task. Therefore, the Director will appoint an **IGEP Officer** from the administrative staff, who will undertake GEP-related responsibilities as part of their assigned duties and allocated working time.

The IGEP officer will be responsible for:

- Collecting and consolidating annual IGEP-related data from relevant administrative units;
- Facilitating the formal implementation of actions proposed by the IGEP Working Group, including administrative procedures, and cooperation agreements with external experts;
- Monitoring the status and outcomes of already implemented actions and supporting reporting and evaluation processes of those actions;
- Ensuring continuity and coordination of GEP-related activities within the Institute.

Beyond the challenge of limited resources, the IGEP Working Group highlighted the importance of continuously monitoring implemented policies and practices. The group noted that equality and inclusion measures cannot be considered permanently secured once introduced, as their effectiveness may diminish over time or be unintentionally undermined by subsequent organizational changes.

For example, beginning in 2025, all classes within the Doctoral School were scheduled in the afternoon to allow doctoral candidates to dedicate daytime hours to research activities. While this change was intended to support research productivity, it may inadvertently create barriers for doctoral candidates with caregiving responsibilities, particularly parents of young children, thereby limiting equal access to training and educational opportunities.

Similarly, the 2026 edition of the Dream Chemistry Award no longer included a provision extending the eligibility period after obtaining a PhD for researchers who took maternity-related career breaks. Previous editions contained such adjustments, consistent with practices commonly applied in European research funding schemes, to ensure that career interruptions related to parenthood did not disadvantage applicants.

It was observed that some established gender equality measures are not being implemented on a regular basis. This applies, for example, to the annual announcement of the “ICHF Returns” competition, which is intended to support the return of research and technical staff to active research work following maternity or parental leave, or an extended absence due to illness.

These examples illustrate the need for regular reviews of institutional policies, regulations, and practices from an equality and inclusion perspective. Even where inclusive measures have previously been introduced, changes in procedures, regulations, or organizational arrangements may unintentionally reintroduce barriers for specific groups.

The implementation of recurring GEP-related actions should be embedded in the responsibilities of staff members with formally allocated working time, rather than relying solely on ad hoc efforts or voluntary engagement.

Based on the experience gained during implementation of the GEP, it is recommended that the responsibilities of the IGEP Officer initially be assigned as a part-time function to an

existing member of staff. To ensure the effective fulfilment of these duties, the individual should receive additional remuneration proportionate to the workload allocated to the role, estimated at approximately 0.2-0.3 full-time equivalent of an administrative salary.

The opportunity should be advertised internally to ensure a transparent selection process and to attract candidates with relevant motivation. While the role may be particularly suitable for administrative staff, it may also be undertaken by researchers as an additional responsibility. The position may also be undertaken by researchers, including those employed in specialist roles with salary levels below the standard administrative pay scale. This approach would provide dedicated capacity for GEP implementation while making efficient use of existing institutional expertise and resources.

Action 1: Appointment of an IGEP officer with dedicated responsibilities	
Description:	An IGEP Officer will be appointed, and responsibilities related to the coordination, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of GEP activities will be formally incorporated into the individual's assigned duties and workload.
Responsibility:	Director
Timeline:	December 2026
Indicator:	At least one staff member assigned official responsibility for IGEP implementation as part of their regular duties

The IGEP Workgroup as well as the Inspire Report identified limited information exchange and insufficient coordination between the GEP, the HR Excellence in Research process, and other equality-related bodies, such as the Anti-Discrimination Committee. Although individual actors demonstrated a strong commitment to equality and inclusion, cooperation was often dependent on informal personal networks rather than established coordination mechanisms.

While the GEP and HR Excellence in Research initiatives contribute to creating a fair and inclusive institutional environment, they address different objectives. HR Excellence in Research provides a broad framework for enhancing research quality, career development, working conditions, and research support systems, whereas the GEP focuses specifically on promoting structural change in the area of gender equality. Strengthening cooperation and information sharing between these frameworks could improve their overall effectiveness while preserving their distinct purposes and responsibilities.

To support greater coordination, an annual meeting will be organised by the Director, to be held each year, bringing together representatives of bodies working on issues related to the themes of the GEP, including the HR Excellence in Research Group, Ombudspersons, and members of the Anti-Discrimination Committee. The meeting will provide an opportunity to exchange information, identify areas for collaboration, coordinate activities, and jointly plan actions for the coming year.

Action 2: Annual meeting	
Description:	An annual coordination meeting will be convened by the Director to strengthen cooperation and information exchange among institutional bodies working on issues related to gender equality, diversity, inclusion, and equal treatment. Participants will include representatives of the IGEP Working Group, the HR Excellence in Research Group, Ombudspersons, the Anti-Discrimination Committee, and other relevant stakeholders. The meeting will serve as a forum for sharing updates on ongoing activities, reviewing achievements and challenges, identifying areas for cooperation, avoiding duplication of efforts, and coordinating priorities and actions for the coming year. It will also support alignment between

	related institutional initiatives while maintaining their respective mandates and objectives. Members of each body will present summary on the actions undertaken during the previous year and outline their planned activities for the following year. Where applicable, summary will respect confidentiality and anonymity requirements, particularly in relation to the Ombudspersons and the Anti-Discrimination Committee. At the same time, relevant numerical data regarding interventions may be included in statistical data to support evidence-based planning of future actions and initiatives.
Responsibility:	Director
Timeline:	Till March 2027
Indicator:	At least one meeting with members of IGEP working group, HR Excellence in Research Group, Ombudspersons, members of the Anti-Discrimination Committee and Directors on which members share reports of their actions and plans for the following year if applicable.

Main human and financial resources allocated to implementation of current GEP include:

- Fees for external experts conducting the survey on working conditions, safety and equal treatment
- Fees for external experts conducting focus group interviews
- Staff time of the IGEP Working Group members
- Staff time of administrative units responsible for data collection;

Human and financial resources required for the implementation of the next IGEP will be allocated by the Director prior to the approval and signing of the new Plan in 2027. The allocated resources will be clearly specified and described within the Plan.

2. Data collection and monitoring

2.1. Quantitative analysis

Members of specific departments have provided specific statistical information.

Employment data

The HR department gathered data regarding types of employment, number of days of different type of leaves and number of people who left employment, all broken down by year and gender.

Table 1. Number of persons employed in each position by year and gender.

		2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
		K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
Researchers											
	Full professors	3	13	3	13	4	15	3	15	3	17
	Associate professors	3	15	3	17	2	13	2	12	2	11
	Adjuncts	21	43	22	39	19	33	17	27	17	29
	Assistants	31	23	15	18	9	14	5	10	6	7
Research & technical workers		34	49	33	46	70	74	94	90	95	89
Engineering & technical workers		13	23	14	17	10	24	10	28	10	20
Administrative employees & others		50	18	57	20	58	20	53	19	54	24

During the period under review, assistant positions were transferred from the scientific positions to research and technical staff positions. Several women defended their habilitation during the period under review, but this is not reflected in the figures. The number of women in higher positions (associate professor, full professor) remains low.

Table 2. Number of persons who left the institute each year by gender.

		2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
		K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
Termination of work		18	29	37	26	27	31	36	11	27	26
Researchers										2	3
	Full professors									0	0
	Associate professors									0	0
	Adjuncts									1	2
	Assistants									1	1
Research & technical workers										18	18
Engineering & technical workers										1	5
Administrative employees & others										6	0

Significantly more women left the organisation in 2024, whilst significantly more men left in 2021. However, none of the trends continues in 2025. Starting from 2025, the data are further disaggregated by position category. The resulting patterns, however, continue to largely reflect the Institute's employment structure, with women being more strongly represented in administrative roles and men in technical positions. Consequently, observed gender differences should be interpreted in the context of this occupational segregation and the unequal distribution of women and men across professional groups.

A questionnaire will be developed to assess the reasons for work termination, to provide valuable information that could improve working conditions at the Institute.

Table 3. Number of days of different types of leave by year and gender.

	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
Leaves										
maternity/paternity/paternal	3559	21	2376	60	979	105	1649	147	1918	114
sick leaves	866	744	1940	1333	1966	1325	3178	1146	1876	1045
holidays	5573	6737	4963	5985	4960	5831	5668	6794	5780	7060
sick leave for child									149	35

Length of holidays taken is similar for men and women, with slightly shorter holidays taken by women, but women take more sick leave than men (from 1.65 to 3.0 times more than men in the last 4 years, not including 2021 due to changes caused by the pandemic). The IGEP working group has decided that the data should be more detailed to include information on whether the sick leave was for the employee themselves or for their child. For this reason, in the extension of the current GEP additional data for 2025 was gathered including the sick leave for child information.

As shown in Table 1, the overall number of women and men employed at the Institute is relatively balanced, with a slight predominance of men (197 men and 187 women in 2025). However, a substantial disparity can be observed in the use of leave to care for sick children, with men accounting for only 19% of the total days taken (Tab.3). This suggests that caregiving responsibilities continue to be distributed unevenly between women and men.

Measures aimed at promoting a more balanced sharing of caregiving responsibilities should therefore be considered in future GEP work plan. Possible initiatives could include awareness-raising activities highlighting the role of men as caregivers, such as communication or poster campaigns, as well as actions promoting the uptake of family-related leave by all employees.

At the same time, further diagnosis is needed to better understand the factors underlying the low uptake of caregiving leave by men. It would be valuable to explore whether this reflects personal preferences, practical family arrangements, workplace culture, concerns about possible career repercussions, or other barriers. Such issues could be investigated through focus groups, interviews, or other qualitative methods, providing a stronger evidence base for future actions.

Even when leave taken to care for sick children is excluded, men use substantially fewer sickness absence days than women. On average, women take approximately nine days of sick leave per year, compared with five days among men. This pattern has remained consistent over time. The difference may reflect a range of factors, including gender norms, workplace culture, or perceived and actual barriers to taking sickness-related leave. The disparity appears larger in data collected before 2025, although comparisons should be interpreted with caution, as leave taken for personal illness and leave to care for sick children were not recorded separately during that period.

Further investigation would be beneficial to better understand the reasons behind this pattern and to identify any institutional or cultural factors that may influence leave-taking behaviour among men.

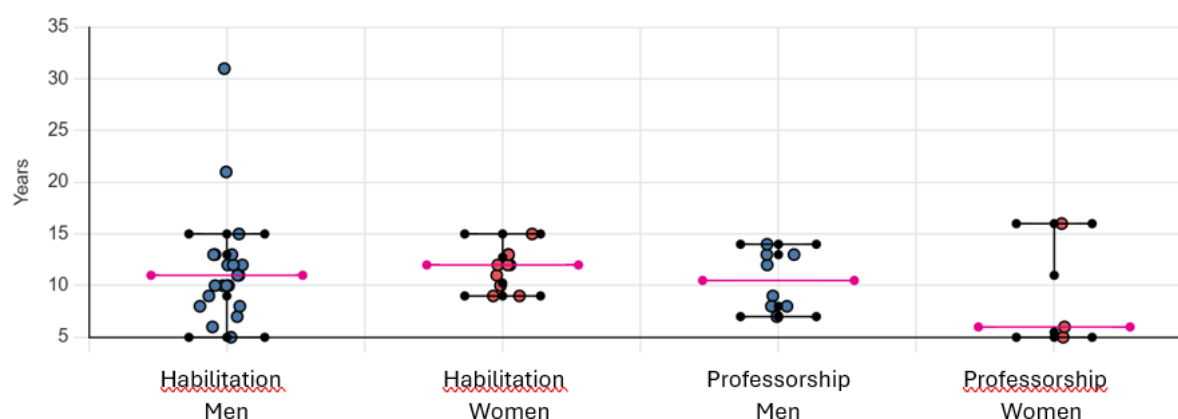


Figure 1. Number of years to obtain habilitation and subsequent professorship divided by gender.

The IGEP group decided to also gather information regarding returns to the Institute and information regarding promotion including time between promotions. The numerical data regarding returns does not provide useful information as without context it is not possible to note any trends. Equal number of men and women came back to the institute in 2025, with most positions.

In the extension of the plan data on time between promotions by gender was collected by the Scientific Secretary. Data describes habilitation time for 21 men and 10 women and time to

full professor for 8 men and 3 women. The data presented in Figure 1 does not show important differences in time needed to obtain habilitation by men and women. Lower median for professorship time for women might be caused by the small sample size (3).

Delegation data

Information on the total number of days spent at conferences/courses and on scientific visits (laboratory visits, consultations, etc.) was broken down by gender, but also by type of employment. The number of research visits longer than 10 days was also evaluated by gender. This information makes it possible to monitor whether certain groups of researchers travel more for a particular type of visit (e.g. younger researchers for longer laboratory visits, professors for conferences) and when resources are shared equally (in the case of conference attendance).

Previous analysis for 2019-2020 showed that the length of travel did not differ by gender (~12 days on average), and that female staff travelled more than men (28% of researchers are women, while female researchers' travel days account for 47%). However, the analysis based on career stage for that data was not included.

Table 4 Number of days spent at conferences or courses by gender, year and position.

Courses/counferences	number of days							
	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
Researchers								
Full professors	19	69	28	164	76	92	28	194
Associate professors	7	51	34	117	0	337	14	116
Adjuncts	105	137	138	267	430	414	171	149
Assistants	126	74	114	125	0	0	13	29
Research & technical workers	128	109	309	295	699	550	348	309
Engineering & technical workers	18	5	35	73	0	0	13	29
Administrative employees & others	0	0	104	0	0	0	41	0

Table 5 Average number of days recalculated by number of people spent at conferences or courses by gender, year and position.

Courses/counferences	average number of days							
	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	K -femal	M -males	K -femal	M -males	K -femal	M -males	K -femal	M -males
Researchers								
Full professors	6,3	5,3	9,3	12,6	19,0	6,1	9,3	12,9
Associate professors	2,3	3,4	11,3	6,9	0,0	25,9	7,0	9,7
Adjuncts	5,0	3,2	6,3	6,8	22,6	12,5	10,1	5,5
Assistants	4,1	3,2	7,6	6,9	0,0	0,0	2,6	2,9
Research & technical workers	3,8	2,2	9,4	6,4	10,0	7,4	3,7	3,4
Engineering & technical workers	1,4	0,2	2,5	4,3	0,1	0,0	1,3	1,0
Administrative employees & other	0,0	0,0	1,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,8	0,0

The average number of days spent at conferences by men and women (Table 5), calculated as the number of days spent at conferences for a given gender and position in a given year (Table 4) divided by the number of people employed in that position (Table 1), shows no clear pattern of differences between men and women, with both genders travelling to conferences at similar levels. Men in administration do not travel to conferences/courses, but their numbers are very small, and not all positions allow for training opportunities.

Table 6 Number of days spent on scientific visits (excluding conferences) by gender, year and position.

Laboratory visits/scientific stays	number of days / sumaryczna liczba dni							
	2021		2022		2023		2024	
Researchers	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
Full professors	18	2	61	50	78	114	122	126
Associate professors	0	48	1	44	46	353	1	130
Adjuncts	62	269	189	466	435	474	273	483
Assistants	193	132	7	51	0	0	0	0
Research & technical workers	119	18	184	247	818	644	362	593
Engineering & technical workers	0	0	79	66	0	0	6	182
Administrative employees & other	2	0	0	0	2	2	3	0

Table 7 Average number of days recalculated by number of people spent on scientific visits (excluding conferences) by gender, year and position.

Laboratory visits/scientific stays	average number of days							
	2021		2022		2023		2024	
Researchers	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
Full professors	6,0	0,2	20,3	3,8	19,5	7,6	40,7	8,4
Associate professors	0,0	3,2	0,3	2,6	23,0	27,2	0,5	10,8
Adjuncts	3,0	6,3	8,6	11,9	22,9	14,4	16,1	17,9
Assistants	6,2	5,7	0,5	2,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Research & technical workers	3,5	0,4	5,6	5,4	11,7	8,7	3,9	6,6
Engineering & technical workers	0,0	0,0	5,6	3,9	0,0	0,0	0,6	6,5
Administrative employees & other	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,1	0,1	0,0

Table 8 Number of scientific visits longer than 10 days by gender, year and position.

Laboratory visits/scientific stays	number of stays longer than 10 days							
	2021		2022		2023		2024	
Researchers	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
Full professors	0	0	1	1	5	4	5	6
Associate professors	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	5
Adjuncts	3	11	8	17	6	16	3	13
Assistants	5	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Research & technical workers	2	0	7	6	15	10	9	17
Engineering & technical workers	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1
Administrative employees & others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Although there are very few female professors, they travel more for longer laboratory visits than men. On the other hand, female associate professors did not travel at all for such longer visits. Assistants stopped travelling for research visits (no visits in 2023 and 2024) but currently there are only 15 people on such positions. There are no significant gender differences in research and technical staff after the change in employment 2021/2022 when many assistants were employed as specialists (scientific to technical position).

Positions of power

The deputy director provided information regarding the positions of power and commission and advisory bodies divided by gender.

In terms of positions of power, the share of women remains at a similar level as at the beginning of the evaluation period and the previous evaluation covered by the GEP (2019-2020). Although women hold 35% of managerial positions, their share is not evenly distributed. Women make up 13% of group leaders, have no share of directorship, but are over-represented in administrative positions, with men making up 10% of laboratory managers and 25% of administrative unit managers. Women make up 31% of the Scientific Council and between 23% and 40% of other advisory bodies.

Table 9 Number of persons of each gender in managerial positions and on committees and advisory bodies.

	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
The management positions										
Powers of attorney	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Administration units managers	9	2	10	2	11	3	9	3	9	3
Lab managers	3	0	7	0	10	1	10	1	10	1
Group leaders	5	35	5	36	6	36	5	36	4	28
Head of PhD studies	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Auxiliary units directors	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	1
Deputy directors	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	3
Director	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Chairperson of the scientific council	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
V-ce chairperson of the scientific council	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Chairperson of the Committee for Distinctions and Promotions	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Chairperson of the Committee for the evaluation of scientific staff	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
Chairperson of the Commission on education	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Comissions and advisory bodies										
Scientific council	12	31	14	30	13	31	13	31	14	30
Committee for Distinctions and Promotions	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3
Committee for the evaluation of scientific staff	4	2	4	2	2	4	2	4	2	3
Commission on education	4	9	4	8	3	10	3	10	3	10
Disciplinary Committee	-	-	-	-	1	3	1	3	1	3
International Advisory Board	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	2	4

PhD studies

Data from the Secretary's Office makes it possible to analyse whether gender affects the attrition rate and the ability to obtain a distinction.

Table 11 PhD programme information on the number of people of each gender by year.

	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
PhD students	47	33	40	36	41	34	55	41	41	34
Withdrawal from studies	4	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Number of people that deffended PhD in current year	9	11	10	3	5	7	7	7	5	7
Lenght of studies of people that defended in the current year										
Distinction	6	3	5	2	2	3	4	2	2	3
%Distinction	0,666667	0,27273	0,5	0,66667	0,4	0,4285714	0,571429	0,285714286	0,4	0,42857

For several years, women have constituted the majority of doctoral graduates. However, this higher representation at the doctoral level has not translated into a corresponding increase in representation at subsequent stages of academic career progression.

Analysis of distinctions awarded to doctoral graduates does not indicate any systematic gender-related differences. When the number of women and men receiving a distinction in a given year is considered relative to the total number of doctoral degrees awarded to individuals of the same gender in that year (percentage of distinctions), no consistent trend can be observed suggesting that either gender is more likely to receive a distinction.

The new IGEP group decided that data should also be collected on the duration of studies, as well as information on the number of candidates of each gender at each stage of recruitment (applications submitted, selected for interview, admitted).

Due to GDPR requirements and data retention practices, as well as the fact that recruitment application forms do not include information on applicants' gender, it was not possible to collect historical gender-disaggregated data for all candidates applying to doctoral studies. Data on applicants for other recruitment processes were collected manually by the Scientific Secretary and are presented in Table 12. Analysis of the available data did not reveal any significant differences in the admission rates of women and men. Similar data will be collected for all other recruitments.

Data were also collected on individual supervisors, including the number of doctoral students supervised (with or without an auxiliary supervisor), as well as student outcomes such as successful thesis defences, withdrawals from studies, and changes of supervisor. However, these data are considered sensitive and will therefore not be published as part of the GEP.

Table 12 PhD programme candidates divided by gender.

	2023		2024		2025	
Recruitment	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
submitted application	424		395		399	
interview	22	30	30	33	20	27
hired	13	11	16	18	10	12

Furthermore, the analysis indicated that these indicators have limited interpretative value when considered in isolation. Differences in supervisory arrangements, including varying levels of involvement of auxiliary supervisors, as well as other case-specific factors, may significantly influence outcomes. As a result, meaningful interpretation would require a more detailed qualitative assessment, for example through focus groups or targeted interviews, rather than relying solely on quantitative indicators.

Grants

Data from the Grants Department can be used to analyse whether the submission and success rate in obtaining funding for a particular level of employment is affected by gender.

Table 13 Number of grants submitted and received by year by gender.

	Number of submitted grants							
	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
	19	54	40	36	33	58	47	83
Activity	0,25	0,41	0,38	0,24	0,27	0,38	0,38	0,54
	Number of received grants							
	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males	K -females	M -males
	4	25	10	6	6	13	8	17
Success rate	0,21	0,46	0,25	0,17	0,18	0,22	0,17	0,20

Activity in Table 13 was calculated as the number of grants submitted divided by the number of persons of a given gender employed in scientific and research positions in a given year. Activity fluctuates and no pattern by gender can be observed. The success rate was calculated as the number of grants received by gender in a given year divided by the number of grants submitted by gender in a given year. In the last three years, the success rate is similar for men and women. The year 2022 may have been influenced by the additional workload for women at home during the pandemic.

The IGEP group decided that, after each major research project (employing more than 10 people), additional information should be included showing how many people of each gender were employed on that project and how many of them remained in the organisation after the project ended. In such projects, individuals are often subsequently hired into positions with a lower representation of female researchers. An analysis of these career trajectories could provide additional statistical evidence on whether higher-level positions are more frequently occupied by men due to differences in recruitment practices or unequal opportunities for career advancement.

Publications

The extension includes additional analysis of publication activity, throughout the period 2021-2025, which was prepared by the Library staff.

All data presented below have been normalized to the number of researchers employed in a given position in each year. It is worth noting that due to low number of female professors the comparison might not be reliable in this category.

For all staff categories, the proportion of employees engaged in publishing is slightly lower among women than among men. However, when the analysis is restricted to active publishing researchers, the average number of publications per researcher is broadly comparable between women and men at the same career stage. The main exception is the assistant category, where female assistants consistently demonstrate lower publication output than their male counterparts.

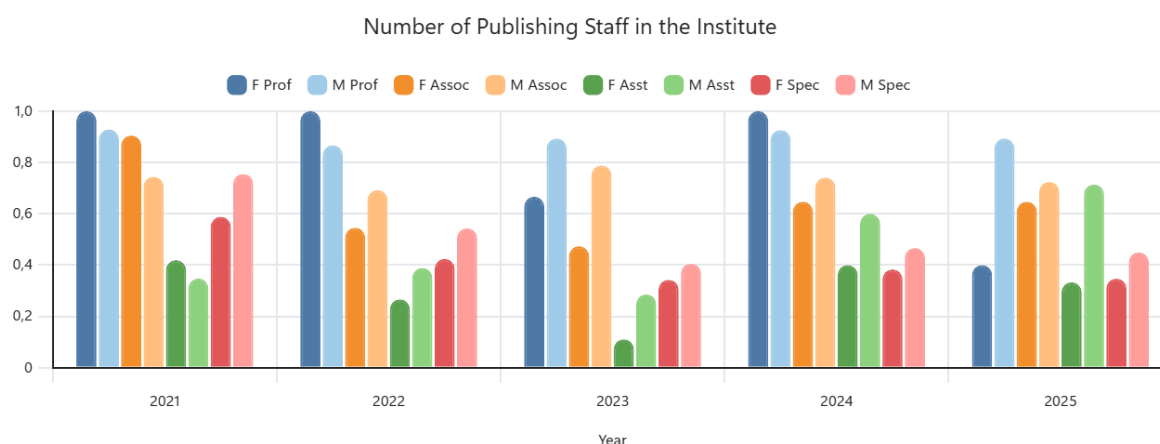


Figure 2. Percentage of publishing staff at each career stage by gender by year.

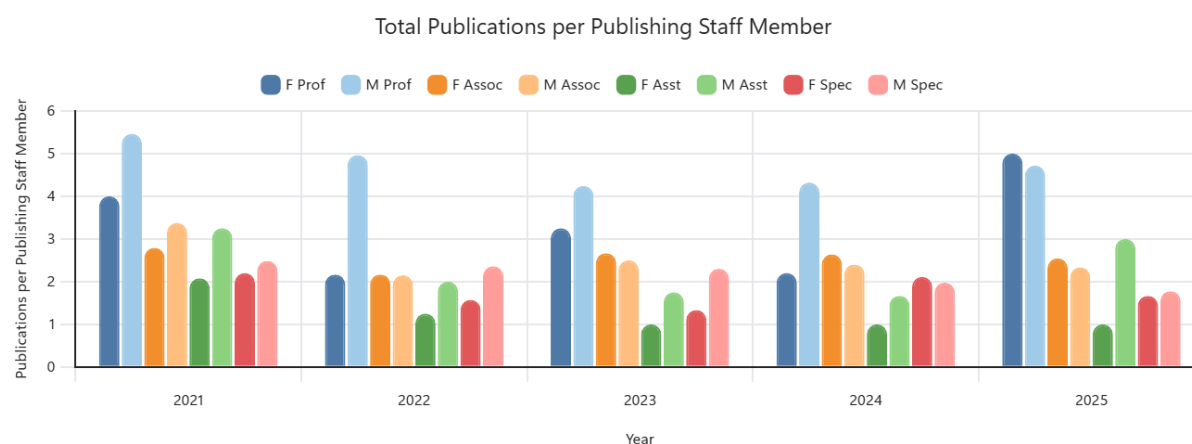


Figure 3. Number of publications recalculated only per publishing staff.

An analysis of publication performance between 2022 and 2025 revealed consistent gender differences in research participation and publication leadership across both adjuncts (adiunkci) and assistants (asystenci). In both groups, men demonstrated higher overall publication activity, were more frequently represented in leading authorship positions, and contributed more often to publications in which they held key scientific roles.

Among adjuncts, the proportion of publishing staff was significantly higher among men than among women (73.6% vs. 57.8%; $p = 0.029$, Mann-Whitney U test). A similar pattern was observed among assistants (49.7% vs. 27.8%), although this difference did not reach

statistical significance ($p = 0.200$). These results indicate that a larger share of male academic staff participated in research and publishing activities across both career stages.

Gender differences were particularly evident in publication leadership. Among adjuncts, men acted as first authors more than 2.4 times as frequently as women ($p = 0.026$), while corresponding authorship was more than three times more common among men ($p = 0.029$). Among assistants, the difference was even more pronounced: men acted as first authors approximately eleven times more frequently than women ($p = 0.036$). Although corresponding authorship was also more common among male assistants, the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.186$). **Overall, these findings suggest that male researchers were more likely to be granted responsibility for research outputs.**

When publications involving a key authorship role (first or corresponding author) were adjusted for the total size of each group, substantial gender differences remained. Among adjuncts, the indicator reached 0.668 for men compared with 0.404 for women ($p = 0.029$). Among assistants, the disparity was considerably larger, with values of 0.279 for men and only 0.017 for women ($p = 0.027$). **This indicates that publications involving researchers in leading authorship roles occurred considerably more frequently among men, particularly at the early-career stage.**

A similar pattern emerged when the indicator was calculated only for actively publishing staff. Among adjuncts, the values were 0.913 for men and 0.714 for women, although the difference was no longer statistically significant ($p = 0.147$). Among assistants, the gap remained substantial (0.600 vs. 0.063; $p = 0.026$), indicating that even among active researchers, men were more likely to occupy leading authorship positions.

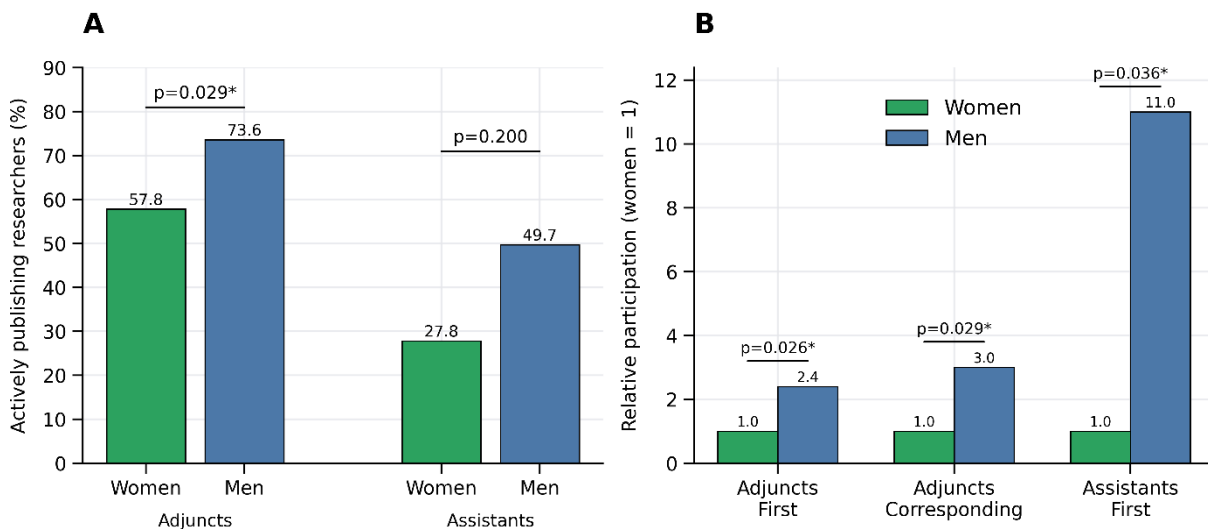


Figure 4. Gender differences in research participation and publication leadership among adjuncts and assistants (2022-2025). (A) Percentage of actively publishing researchers by academic position and gender. (B) Relative participation in leading authorship roles, normalized to women = 1. Men showed higher rates of research participation and were more frequently represented in first-author and corresponding-author positions. P-values indicate statistical significance of gender differences within each academic rank. Mann-Whitney U test. The assistant corresponding-author category is not shown because women did not occupy the corresponding-author position during the analyzed period, while men did so in three publications.

The analysis also revealed differences in publication output. Male adjuncts produced approximately twice as many publications as female adjuncts on average (55.0 vs. 26.8 publications; $p = 0.029$), while male assistants produced more than four times as many publications as female assistants (11.5 vs. 2.5 publications; $p = 0.029$). However, among

adjuncts, no significant gender differences were observed in the median number of publications per person ($p = 0.608$) or the maximum number of publications per individual ($p = 0.298$). **This suggests that the productivity of the most active male and female adjuncts was broadly comparable.** In contrast, among assistants, men achieved significantly higher maximum publication output ($p = 0.036$), indicating differences not only at the group level but also among the most productive individuals.

Taken together, the findings indicate that gender disparities in scientific publishing within the institution are primarily associated with participation in research activity and representation in publication leadership roles. Among adjuncts, differences appear to result mainly from a larger proportion of men being actively involved in publishing and more frequently assuming leadership positions within research outputs, while individual productivity among active researchers remains similar. Among assistants, however, gender differences are evident not only in research participation and publication leadership but also in publication productivity itself. These patterns highlight the importance of monitoring gender equality in access to research opportunities, scientific leadership roles, mentoring, and career development pathways throughout the academic career trajectory.

This pattern may reflect a range of factors, including career-stage characteristics, differences in access to leadership opportunities within research teams, publication practices, mentoring arrangements, or broader organizational and cultural influences. Further analysis is needed before drawing conclusions; however, the finding suggests that the research leadership opportunities available to early-career female researchers should be examined more closely. It would also be valuable to examine the potential impact of career interruptions, including maternity or parental leave, as well as other factors that may influence research productivity at early career stages.

These findings are particularly noteworthy because they coincide with a critical stage of the institutional “leaky pipeline,” where women are well represented among PhD candidates, but their representation declines at subsequent career stages.

The IGEP Working Group also identified the analysis of recruitment data, including the number of candidates of each gender at successive stages of the recruitment process (applications received, candidates shortlisted for interview, and candidates ultimately hired), as an important area for monitoring gender equality. However, such a retrospective analysis was not feasible because historical recruitment records containing personal data were no longer available due to GDPR requirements and the limited retention period for recruitment documentation.

Current relevant data are being systematically gathered for all recruitment procedures conducted from 2026 onwards, enabling future analyses of potential gender differences throughout the recruitment process.

2.2 Qualitative findings

Qualitative findings are based on “Report on GE/EDI developments at the Institute of Physical Chemistry, Polish Academy of Sciences” by Ewa Krzaklewska, Paulina Sekuła, Marta Warat. The primary method of data collection was a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with key stakeholders involved in the development, implementation, monitoring, and application of GEP measures. Participants included members of the Institute’s management, personnel responsible for equality-related activities, administrative staff, and individuals directly affected by or benefiting from GEP initiatives. In total, eight individual interviews and two focus group discussions were carried out, involving 13 participants.

The interviews explored stakeholders' experiences with GEP implementation, perceptions of organisational culture and dynamics, and views on the effectiveness, impact, and long-term sustainability of the measures introduced under the plan.

To complement the qualitative data, a document review and secondary data analysis were conducted. This included an examination of key institutional documents, such as the Gender Equality Plan and its implementation reports, which provide information on undertaken activities and achieved outcomes. Available statistical, administrative, and institutional data relevant to gender equality were also analysed to provide contextual background and to support the interpretation of the interview findings.

Main findings and recommendations

1. Governance, leadership and institutionalisation of gender equality

Analysis: The implementation of the previous Gender Equality Plan (GEP) demonstrated commitment to gender equality but remained largely dependent on individual initiatives, project-based activities, and voluntary engagement. A key challenge was the division between the team that designed the GEP and the team responsible for implementation, which reduced ownership and understanding of the intended objectives and actions. Gender equality work relied heavily on invisible and unrecognised labour. As contributions to gender equality were not formally acknowledged in promotion criteria or career development processes, staff often prioritised activities directly linked to career progression. This created tensions between work responsibilities and engagement in GEP implementation, leading to declining participation over time.

The organisation also lacks clear mechanisms of accountability. No formal procedures, performance indicators, reporting requirements, or evaluation systems were identified for assessing the contribution of middle and senior management to gender equality objectives. Leadership support was reported as inconsistent, with some parts of the organisation not recognising gender inequality as a significant institutional issue.

Recommendations:

- Transition from project-based activities to a long-term institutional approach to gender equality.
- Develop a clear governance framework for GEP implementation with defined roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms by including gender equality objectives in the evaluation of senior and middle management.
- Require senior and top management to participate in at least one gender equality capacity-building activity during each GEP cycle and communicate participation internally.
- Formally recognise engagement in gender equality activities within promotion, appraisal, and career development systems.
- Strengthen the structure and capacity of the GEP working group by clarifying members' responsibilities, expected contributions, and decision-making authority.
- Provide formal recognition and support for gender equality work through awards, workload recognition, career incentives, or other institutional mechanisms that increase the visibility and value of such contributions.
- Support and resource bottom-up initiatives, enabling staff-led activities and ideas to contribute to organisational change and strengthen ownership of gender equality objectives.

2. Resources and capacity for gender equality work

Analysis: Implementation capacity was weakened by organisational overburdening, unclear responsibilities, and reliance on voluntary contributions. The GEP Coordinator role carried substantial responsibilities but lacked adequate institutional recognition and dedicated resources. Similarly, individuals involved in gender equality work often lacked formal time allocation, incentives, or compensation. The organisation's STEM-focused profile also limits access to internal gender expertise. Individuals engaged in equality work frequently do not have specialist knowledge in gender studies, making it more difficult to design evidence-based interventions and address complex gender equality challenges.

Recommendations:

- Establish the GEP Coordinator position as a formally remunerated role with dedicated working time and budgetary authority.
- Provide financial recognition or workload allocation for GEP Working Group members.
- Allocate dedicated funding for gender equality activities, including training, consultations, surveys, and support services.
- Strengthen institutional access to gender expertise through collaboration with external experts and specialist organisations.
- Ensure continuous professional development opportunities for staff involved in GEP implementation.

3. Monitoring, Data Collection and Evaluation

Analysis: The organisation's gender equality monitoring system relies primarily on administrative and HR data. While some qualitative evidence exists, systematic collection of organisational culture data is limited. There are no regular organisational climate surveys, no systematic surveys on sexual harassment or gender-based violence (GBV), and no routine collection of employee perceptions regarding inclusion and equality.

Furthermore, available data are often not processed or presented in formats that support regular monitoring. Monitoring processes depend heavily on manual work and individual effort. Organisational trust in data collection processes also appears limited.

At present, monitoring functions more as a reporting exercise than as a continuous learning and improvement process.

Recommendations:

- Establish a minimum annual or biannual monitoring dataset covering:
 - o recruitment pipelines,
 - o promotions,
 - o leadership positions,
 - o salaries and pay gaps,
 - o contract types,
 - o parental leave and return rates,
 - o staff turnover,
 - o GBV and harassment reporting and response indicators.
- Implement a repeatable reporting routine: set up a small, fixed set of indicators and deliver them on a regular schedule (e.g., as a dashboard or a standard 'data extract pack'), so the GEP team receives clean, comparable figures without chasing multiple PDFs and doing manual consolidation.
- Clarify responsibility for data collection, processing, and reporting across HR, EDI, and relevant administrative units.

- Develop a continuous monitoring cycle based on the principles of collect → analyse → act → review.
- Align monitoring and evaluation processes to support organisational learning.
- Complement quantitative indicators with regular qualitative feedback mechanisms.

4. Organisational culture, gender knowledge and awareness

Analysis: The influence of gender stereotypes remains a significant challenge. Interviews identified persistent assumptions regarding career paths, leadership, task allocation, and gender roles. While some stakeholders demonstrated advanced understanding of gendered mechanisms, broader organisational awareness remains uneven.

The organisation faces challenges related to limited awareness of existing support mechanisms, fear of reporting incidents, insufficient trust in institutional procedures, and uncertainty about management support.

Participatory approaches have also been underdeveloped. No systematic needs assessments, participatory design processes, or gender expert consultations were identified during GEP implementation.

Recommendations:

- Introduce regular training on gender equality, unconscious bias, and inclusive leadership. Make training mandatory for:
 - o senior management,
 - o research group leaders,
 - o recruitment panels,
 - o evaluation committees.
- Conduct regular organisational culture and climate surveys.
- Carry out survey-based needs assessments to inform GEP actions.
- Involve internal and external gender experts in the design, implementation, and evaluation of initiatives.
- Translate monitoring data into meaningful discussions on career progression, leadership, workload distribution, and workplace culture.
- Close the feedback loop by sharing consultation results and explaining how stakeholder input has informed decisions and actions.

5. Gender-based violence, harassment and safe working environment

Analysis: Implementation of measures addressing gender-based violence and harassment was limited. Existing measures primarily focused on disciplinary procedures, while prevention, awareness-raising, victim support, and systematic monitoring were largely absent.

Limited awareness of reporting mechanisms, fear of reporting, and low trust in institutional responses may contribute to underreporting and hinder the creation of a safe and inclusive workplace.

Recommendations:

- Develop a comprehensive GBV and harassment prevention framework.
- Introduce regular prevalence and climate surveys on harassment and workplace safety.
- Implement awareness-raising campaigns on reporting procedures and available support.

- Provide specialised support services and clear protection protocols for affected individuals.
- Introduce bystander intervention training and consent-based training programmes.
- Strengthen the role of ombudspersons and ensure visibility of support mechanisms.
- Establish routine monitoring of reported incidents and institutional responses.

6. Women's career development and leadership

Analysis: The organisation recognises the need to strengthen women's representation in leadership positions. While a mentoring programme is under development, structural barriers continue to affect women's career progression. Particular challenges include access to competitive grants, leadership opportunities, and visibility within the organisation.

At the same time, some women express reservations regarding initiatives exclusively targeting women, perceiving them as potentially stigmatising or discriminatory. This highlights the importance of designing interventions that address structural barriers while maintaining broad institutional support.

Recommendations:

- Implement mentoring and sponsorship programmes aimed at supporting women's career progression and leadership development.
- Increase the visibility of women leaders through institutional communication and role-model initiatives.
- Analyse barriers affecting women's access to competitive grants and senior academic positions.
- Develop targeted support mechanisms for grant applications and career progression.
- Consider the promotion of professional lab management functions to reduce administrative burdens on research leaders.
- Ensure interventions focus on addressing structural barriers rather than perceptions of individual deficits.

7. Gender dimension in research and innovation

Analysis: The integration of sex and gender analysis into research and innovation content received limited attention during the previous GEP cycle and remains a significant gap. Researchers currently receive limited guidance and support in assessing whether sex and gender dimensions are relevant to their research.

This gap is particularly important in the context of Horizon Europe and other funding programmes where integration of the gender dimension is increasingly expected.

Recommendations:

- Make the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation a strategic priority in the next GEP.
- Develop a dedicated support function or guidance package tailored to the organisation's STEM profile.
- Provide training on sex and gender analysis in research design, methodologies, data collection, and dissemination.
- Offer practical examples demonstrating discipline-specific applications of gender analysis.
- Provide expert consultation services to support researchers preparing grant applications.

- Raise awareness of funding requirements related to sex and gender dimensions in research.

8. Inclusion, diversity and intersectionality

Analysis: Although equality and diversity are referenced within the GEP framework, inclusion and intersectionality are largely absent. Foreign researchers and PhD candidates were consistently identified as groups requiring greater institutional support. Participation of international postdoctoral researchers remains particularly challenging.

Other potentially vulnerable groups, including neurodiverse employees and LGBT+ staff, are currently not adequately reflected in GEP activities or monitoring processes.

Recommendations:

- Explicitly incorporate intersectionality into the next GEP.
- Conduct targeted needs assessments among underrepresented groups.
- Strengthen support measures for international researchers, particularly postdoctoral researchers.
- Include the experiences of neurodiverse staff, LGBT+ employees, and other underrepresented groups within monitoring and consultation activities.
- Use participatory approaches to co-design inclusion measures with affected communities.
- Ensure that diversity and inclusion objectives are integrated across all GEP actions rather than addressed as separate initiatives.

The next Gender Equality Plan should prioritise the institutionalisation of gender equality through stronger governance, dedicated resources, systematic monitoring, leadership accountability, integration of gender dimensions into research, and inclusive approaches that recognise diverse staff experiences. Sustainable progress will require moving beyond individual actions and voluntary engagement towards a coordinated organisational framework supported by clear responsibilities, measurable objectives, dedicated funding, and continuous learning processes.

Action 3: Focus groups	
Description:	Focus groups will be carried out by external expert. The topics should include but not be limited to: - factors underlying the low uptake of caregiving leave by men - factors underlying the low use of sick leave among men - factors influencing supervisory outcomes in doctoral education, including student withdrawals, changes of supervisor, and completion rates - factors influencing lower participation rates of female hired at assistant and adjunct positions in corresponding or first author roles in publications
Responsibility:	IGEP Working Group
Timeline:	September-December 2026
Indicator:	Number of focus groups conducted by an external expert

Action 4: Work termination questionnaire	
Description:	A work termination questionnaire, approved by the Director, will be implemented by the Human Resources Department and distributed to all employees ending their employment with the Institute. The questionnaire will serve as a tool for collecting systematic feedback on employees' experiences, including issues related to working conditions, career

	development, organizational culture, equality, diversity, and inclusion. Information gathered through the questionnaire will contribute to institutional monitoring and support evidence-based improvements in relevant policies and practices. The document will be reviewed by the Directorate in consultation with the consultation group established within HRS4R actions.
Responsibility:	IGEP working group
Timeline:	December 2026
Indicator:	A work termination questionnaire, approved by the Director, and received by the HR department.

Action 5: Minimal monitoring dataset	
Description:	A minimal institutional monitoring dataset will be established and updated annually. Data will be collected in a structured and readily usable format rather than as separate reports or PDF documents, allowing efficient analysis and long-term trend monitoring. The IGEP Officer will be responsible for collecting, consolidating, and preparing the dataset on an annual basis in cooperation with relevant administrative units. The data will be presented in a standardised format to ensure consistency across reporting periods. The IGEP Working Group will analyse the dataset annually to identify trends, inequalities, emerging challenges, and areas requiring further action. The results of the analysis will inform the development of new measures, revisions to existing actions, and the preparation of annual and final IGEP implementation reports.
Responsibility:	IGEP Working Group
Timeline:	December 2026
Indicator:	Templates for a minimal monitoring dataset including also data on the use of implemented actions.

Action 6: Anonymous questionnaire regarding working conditions	
Description:	To systematically monitor employees' experiences, perceptions, and needs related to working conditions, gender equality, organisational culture, and workplace well-being, and to use the findings to inform evidence-based institutional improvements. The Institute will conduct a regular anonymous staff survey, administered by an independent external organisation, to assess key aspects of the working environment and organisational culture. The survey will gather information on: - working conditions, including recruitment, promotion, training opportunities, and career development; - work-life balance, flexible working arrangements, remote work, and caring responsibilities; - organisational culture, inclusiveness, and perceptions of gender equality; - workplace behaviour, including bullying, harassment, discrimination, microaggressions, and breaches of professional conduct; - demographic characteristics necessary to identify groups that may require additional support while maintaining full anonymity. Results will be analysed in an aggregated form and used to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and emerging challenges. Findings will be presented to management, employees, and relevant committees, and

	will inform updates to the Gender Equality Plan and related institutional policies. The survey will be conducted in a fully anonymous manner by external researchers to ensure confidentiality and encourage honest feedback.
Responsibility:	IGEP Working Group
Timeline:	June-September 2026
Indicator:	Report from the questionnaire

3. Aim and action plan

The primary objective of this GEP is to develop a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of gender equality challenges and needs within the Institute, providing a solid foundation for the design of effective and proportionate measures in the next Gender Equality Plan (GEP) cycle.

The previous GEP was informed by an internal diagnosis based on institutional statistics and focus groups conducted by internal staff. While these activities provided valuable insights, the process may have limited the extent to which participants felt comfortable sharing sensitive experiences and views openly. Consequently, additional efforts were considered necessary to obtain a more comprehensive and independent assessment of the organisational context. The IGEP Working Group strengthened institutional data collection practices by introducing new methods for gathering and stratifying statistical data, while also incorporating additional metrics relevant to gender equality, including publication records and leave taken for childcare responsibilities.

A significant challenge for the implementation of gender equality measures has been the limited institutional capacity available for GEP-related work. Members of the GEP Working Group undertake these responsibilities in addition to their primary professional duties, without dedicated time allocation or stable resources. As a result, every proposed activity requires separate discussions regarding responsibilities, staffing and funding, making long-term planning and implementation difficult.

As a STEM-oriented institution, the organisation places strong emphasis on evidence-based decision-making. Both employees and management expect robust data demonstrating the existence of a problem and the likely effectiveness of proposed interventions. This creates a particular need for reliable and systematically collected data that can support the development of gender equality actions and facilitate institutional engagement.

Experience shared by colleagues from other research organisations and universities implementing Gender Equality Plans also highlights the importance of carefully designed interventions. Interviews conducted by the Chair of the IGEP Working Group with staff members from three major Polish universities highlighted that gender equality interventions require careful design and implementation. Respondents noted that inadequately planned actions may generate negative effects, increase polarisation, or lead to perceptions that equality initiatives are unfair or unnecessary. This underlines the need to build a strong evidence base before introducing more ambitious measures.

For this reason, the extended version of the action plan places greater emphasis on data collection and diagnosis than originally envisaged. Some actions included in earlier version have been postponed, not because they were considered unimportant, but because current institutional capacities and resources are insufficient to ensure their effective implementation even with the prolonged time.

The original GEP was intended to cover a shorter implementation period. However, as also identified in the INSPIRE evaluation, the working group has experienced significant workload pressures, while governance structures and responsibilities have not always been sufficiently clear to support efficient implementation. These factors have slowed progress and highlighted the need for stronger institutional support and more sustainable implementation arrangements.

One example concerns the planned implementation of the GEAM survey. Initially, the working group intended to carry out the survey internally. However, the group lacked expertise in social science research methodologies and faced a number of challenges, including survey design, selection of appropriate indicators, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, data analysis, and interpretation of results. Combined with the fact that GEP work is performed alongside other professional obligations, these challenges prevented the survey from being implemented internally.

Efforts were also made to secure external support. The Chair of the working group contacted more than ten external providers, organised numerous online meetings, and maintained extensive correspondence in order to identify suitable partners. Although significant time and effort were invested in this process, the necessary budget for external implementation was not approved.

Eventually, additional institutional data were collected by relevant administrative units. To ensure methodological rigour, professional analysis and full confidentiality for participants, the INSPIRE project team was contracted to conduct the GEAM survey. In parallel, an external expert was appointed to facilitate focus groups, enabling independent data collection and creating conditions that encouraged participants to share their perspectives openly.

These activities provide the foundation for the present action plan and are intended to support the development of evidence-based, sustainable, and institutionally supported gender equality measures in future GEP cycles.

The actions outlined below address the key challenges currently identified within the organisation that can realistically be tackled during the present GEP implementation cycle.

3.1 Work-life balance and organizational culture

Action 7: Scheduling of classes within doctoral school	
Description:	To ensure equal access to doctoral education and training opportunities, the Institute will review the impact of current Doctoral School scheduling practices on doctoral candidates with different personal and family circumstances. Since 2025, classes have been scheduled exclusively in the afternoon to allow doctoral candidates to dedicate daytime hours to research activities. While this arrangement is intended to support research productivity, it may create unintended challenges for candidates with caregiving responsibilities, particularly parents of young children. During the current GEP cycle, a written statement will be published informing doctoral candidates that, within each four-year Doctoral School cycle, every course will be scheduled at least once within parent-friendly hours (09:00-15:00). The Institute's representative on the Doctoral School Programme Board will be responsible for ensuring the availability of such class sessions in future teaching cycles and for communicating this information to students. To increase awareness of available arrangements among doctoral candidates with caregiving responsibilities, information about parent-friendly scheduling opportunities will also be provided by the HR Office to any doctoral candidate who welcomes a child into their family. This measure aims to improve the accessibility of doctoral education and support the equal participation of candidates with caring responsibilities.
Responsibility:	Programme Board Member at Warsaw PhD School in Natural and BioMedical Sciences
Timeline:	December 2026
Indicator:	Information on parent-friendly class schedules (09:00-15:00) made available to students.

3.2 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Action 8: Development and adoption of standard equality-protective eligibility provisions for awards, prizes and internal competitions	
Description:	To promote equal opportunities and ensure that career interruptions related to childcare responsibilities are appropriately recognised, the Institute will prepare and formally approve a standard clause to be included in regulations governing internal awards, prizes, distinctions, recruitment procedures, and other competitions that use eligibility criteria based on the length of scientific career, period since obtaining a degree, or other time-based achievements. The proposed provision will introduce an extension of eligibility periods by 18 months for each child for primary caregivers, reflecting good practices commonly applied in research funding schemes. In addition, eligibility periods will be extended by 12 months per child for fathers or second parents who have undertaken a substantial share of caregiving responsibilities, including at least six months of combined parental, paternity, childcare, or child-related care leave e.g. sick leave for child). The provision will recognise the impact of caregiving responsibilities on research careers and help ensure that researchers are not disadvantaged in evaluations based solely on uninterrupted career progression.
Responsibility:	IGEP Working Group
Timeline:	December 2026
Indicator:	Standard eligibility-extension clause developed, approved, and made available for use in all relevant Institute regulations and calls.

3.3 Integration of the gender dimension into research and innovation content

Action 9: Gender dimension training	
Description:	To strengthen the integration of sex and gender analysis in research and innovation, the IGEP Working Group will identify and promote relevant external training opportunities, webinars, and workshops delivered by specialised organisations and experts. The selected materials will be shared with the Institute's research community through internal communication channels and made easily accessible to researchers preparing grant applications and research projects. The aim of this action is to increase researchers' awareness and competence regarding the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation and to support the preparation of higher-quality, more inclusive and competitive research proposals.
Responsibility:	IGEP Working Group
Timeline:	December 2026
Indicator:	Training materials and guidance on the gender dimension in research made available to staff

Action 10: Gender dimension inclusion in new grants	
Description:	To strengthen the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation, the Institute will introduce a dedicated field related to the consideration of sex and gender aspects in the Information on a Planned Proposal Submission form or at other step of the grant submission process. Applicants will be asked to indicate whether the sex and/or gender dimension is relevant to the proposed research and, where applicable, briefly describe how it will be addressed in the project design, methodology, data collection, analysis, or dissemination activities.

	The introduction of this field aims to raise researchers' awareness of the importance of considering sex and gender dimensions in research, support compliance with the requirements of national and international funding programmes, including Horizon Europe, and encourage early reflection on the relevance of these aspects during proposal development. Information collected through the form will also enable the Institute to monitor the extent to which gender dimension considerations are being incorporated into research proposals and to identify areas where additional guidance or training may be needed.
Responsibility:	Deputy director
Timeline:	December 2026
Indicator:	1. Inclusion of gender dimension field in the form Information on a planned proposal submission or other step of the process. 2. Annual monitoring of the number and proportion of submitted proposals that assess the relevance of sex and gender dimensions against those stating that gender dimension is not relevant with annual summary provided to the IGEP working group.

3.4 Prevention of gender-based violence and harassment

More targeted actions will be proposed following the analysis of data collected during the current GEP cycle. Until then, the Institute will focus primarily on awareness-raising activities aimed at increasing understanding of gender equality issues and building support for future interventions.

Action 11: Integration of gender equality capacity-building into annual research group and core facility reporting	
Description:	To strengthen leadership accountability and ensure continuous development of gender equality competencies, all Research Groups and the Laboratory of Specialised Equipment will be required to report on gender equality capacity-building activities undertaken by their leaders and staff as part of their annual Sprawozdanie Zespołu Badawczego lub Laboratorium Aparatury Specjalistycznej. The report template will be updated to include a dedicated section on gender equality, diversity and inclusion activities. At least once during each GEP cycle, research group leaders, core facility managers, members of recruitment and evaluation committees, and other staff with managerial responsibilities will be expected to participate in a capacity-building activity related to gender equality, unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, prevention of gender-based violence (GBV), harassment, or other relevant equality and diversity topics. Participation in such activities, including internal and external training courses, workshops, seminars, or conferences, will be documented in the annual report. This measure aims to increase awareness of gender equality issues among those holding leadership responsibilities, promote a respectful and inclusive working environment, and embed gender equality considerations into the routine management and evaluation processes of the Institute. The annual report will include separate sections documenting gender equality, diversity and inclusion activities undertaken by both group members and group leaders. The reported data will be compiled annually and submitted to the IGEP working group for monitoring, analysis, and evaluation of institutional capacity-building efforts.
Responsibility:	Director
Timeline:	December 2026

Indicator:	1. Updated annual reporting template containing a section on gender equality and inclusion activities; 2. Percentage of Research Groups and the Laboratory of Specialised Equipment reporting participation in gender equality, unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, or GBV-related training; 3. Percentage of managers and group leaders participating in at least one relevant capacity-building activity during each GEP cycle.
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3.5. Preparation of next IGEP

Action 12: Preparation of next IGEP	
Description:	Based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the current IGEP cycle, a new Institutional Gender Equality Plan (IGEP) for the next period will be developed. The preparation process will build on the findings of the statistical analysis, the GEAM survey, focus groups, interviews, and the evaluation of the current plan. The development of the new IGEP will be carried out in consultation with the external expert responsible for conducting the focus groups and analysing the qualitative data. Where additional expertise is required, external specialists or companies with experience in gender equality planning and organisational change may also be consulted. To ensure broad participation and ownership of the future plan, the IChF community will be invited to contribute to the design of new actions. At least two open meetings will be organised, during which employees will be able to discuss the evaluation results, identify priorities, and propose new measures for inclusion in the next IGEP. The proposed actions will subsequently be reviewed during the annual meeting of GEP-related bodies in January, including representatives of the IGEP working group, HR, management, and other relevant institutional structures. Before the new IGEP is formally adopted, the Director will review and approve the resources required for each planned action, including personnel, organisational support, and financial resources.
Responsibility:	IGEP Working Group
Timeline:	May 2027
Indicator:	1. New IGEP developed and approved; 2. At least two community consultation meetings organised; 3. Resources formally assigned to planned actions prior to adoption of the IGEP

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

4.1 Key Achievements (2022-2025)

Since the adoption of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in 2022, IChF PAN has introduced a range of initiatives aimed at creating a more inclusive, transparent and supportive working environment. Many of these measures were implemented by the HR Excellence in Research initiative, Institute management and engaged members of the IChF community.

Strengthening institutional support and governance

- Establishment of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) Working Group to coordinate equality-related activities and monitor implementation.
- Creation of the position of Scientist Ombudswoman alongside the existing Ombudsman, providing dedicated support channels for employees and doctoral candidates.
- Establishment of the Antidiscrimination Committee and implementation of a formal Anti-Discrimination Procedure.
- Development of procedures related to discrimination, harassment and workplace misconduct.

Improving awareness and organisational culture

- Delivery of training on intercultural communication, discrimination, mobbing prevention and workplace inclusion.
- Dissemination of educational materials on equality, diversity and inclusion through the Institute newsletter.
- Establishment of communication channels and networking opportunities for women researchers and other interested members of the community.

Enhancing recruitment and transparency

- Development of the "Competition Committee Toolkit" promoting transparent, merit-based and fair recruitment practices.
- Preparation of comprehensive Welcome to IChF guides for new employees and doctoral candidates in Polish and English.
- Improved accessibility of institutional policies, procedures and support mechanisms through the intranet and newsletter.

Supporting work-life balance and parents

- Introduction of new family-support measures within the Social Benefits Fund, including childcare, school-start allowances and support following the birth of a child.
- Extension of employee benefits to doctoral candidates through part-time employment contracts.
- Implementation of flexible and remote working arrangements for employees with caring responsibilities.
- Organisation of institute-wide discussions on combining parenthood and scientific careers.
- Launch of the "IChF Returns " programme supporting researchers returning after career breaks.

Supporting career development

- Appointment of Career Development Advisors providing individual consultations and career planning support.
- Organisation of mentoring and career-development training
- Creation of opportunities for postdoctoral researchers to explore scientific independence through the "Research Group Opening Experience" initiative within PD2PI project.

Reducing administrative burden

- Introduction of laboratory manager/coordinator positions to support research groups with administrative, organisational and operational tasks, allowing researchers to focus more on scientific work.
- Expansion of administrative support and services for international researchers and employees.

Improving well-being

- Provision of professional psychological, psychotherapeutic and psychiatric support services for employees and doctoral candidates in multiple languages.

Increasing visibility and representation

- Increased participation of women and early-career researchers in various institutional committees and evaluation bodies.
- Appointment of a communication and public relations specialist responsible for promoting scientific achievements and improving visibility of researchers.

4.2. Timeline of current planned actions:

Period	Key Milestones	Related Actions
June-September 2026	Anonymous staff survey conducted by an external organisation; report prepared and analysed.	Action 6
September-December 2026	Focus groups conducted by an external expert to investigate issues identified through quantitative data and the survey.	Action 3
December 2026	Appointment of IGEP Officer and establishment of formal implementation responsibilities.	Action 1
	Implementation of work termination questionnaire and establishment of minimal institutional monitoring dataset.	Actions 4, 5
	Introduction of parent-friendly doctoral school scheduling measures and communication procedures.	Action 7
	Development and adoption of equality-protective eligibility provisions for awards, recruitment and internal competitions.	Action 8
	Gender dimension support package implemented, including training resources and integration of gender-dimension considerations into grant submission procedures.	Actions 9, 10
	Introduction of gender equality, diversity and inclusion reporting requirements within annual research group and core facility reports.	Action 11
By March 2027	Annual coordination meeting of IGEP-related institutional bodies to review progress, share reports and align future priorities.	Action 2
December 2026-February 2027	Development of the next IGEP, including data analysis, evaluation of current actions and at least two community consultation meetings.	Action 12
By May 2027	Final approval and adoption of the new IGEP, with resources formally assigned for implementation.	Action 12