

Gender Equality Plan

for the Institute of Physical Chemistry, Polish Academy of Sciences

up to 30.09.2025

Transitioning towards an Inclusive Gender Equality Plan

Emilia Witkowska Nery, PhD Eng; Steven Linfield, PhD



Following the example of the European Commission, the Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences 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. In the following sections, the formation of the IGEP working group and the actions it will take in the ensuing transition period will be described.

1. 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 2025-2028) 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

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.

Order 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 September 2025, giving the working group enough time to plan the tasks which will be pursued after this date. Shifting the deadline for work plan preparation to a less busy period will also have a positive impact on the commitment of all involved and will allow for the collection of statistical data from the last year of GEP implementation.

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. In September of each year, based on the prepared plan, the members of the working group will schedule events and tasks for the following year (October to September). 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. The meetings will take place in September (scheduling of events and tasks), December, March and May (updates on the implementation of the tasks). In addition, the team will organise a general meeting in February with the other bodies working on tasks related to IGEP themes, including the HR Excellence in Research Group, Ombudspersons and representatives of the Anti-Discrimination Committee. This will allow the work of all bodies to be coordinated and the actions for the coming year to be better planned.

Each October, 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 template will be prepared by all members of the working group together with the work plan.

2. Data collection and monitoring

The previous GEP (2022-2024) was based on the analysis of available gender data and on information from focus group interviews conducted by an IChF PAN staff member. The administrative staff did not have time allocated for ongoing data analysis, which is often done manually by analysing individual documents and is therefore very laborious. As a result, it was difficult to monitor the progress of the GEP implementation.

2.1. Statistical data obtained from different departments of IChF PAN

Members of specific departments have provided specific information as follows.

HR department – 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	
	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
Associate professors	3	15	3	17	2	13	2	12
Adjuncts	21	43	22	39	19	33	17	27
Assistants	31	23	15	18	9	14	5	10
Research & technical workers	34	49	33	46	70	74	94	90
Engineering & technical workers	13	23	14	17	10	24	10	28
Administrative employees & others	50	18	57	20	58	20	53	19

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. Data on time between promotions by gender will be collected and used in the development of the new plan.

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

	2021		2022		2023		2024	
	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

Significantly more women left the organisation in 2024, whilst significantly more men left in 2021. 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	
	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
sick leaves	866	744	1940	1333	1966	1325	3178	1146
holidays	5573	6737	4963	5985	4960	5831	5668	6794

Length of holidays taken is similar for men and women, but women take more sick leave than men (from 1.65 to 3.0 times more than men in the last 3 years, not including 2021 due to changes caused by the pandemic). The IGEP working group has decided that the data for the period 01.10.2025-30.09.2028 should be more detailed to include information on whether the sick leave was for the employee themselves or for their child.

Table 4. Average number of days of leave by gender

	2021		2022		2023		2024	
Leaves	K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males
maternity/paternity/paternal	23,0	0,1	16,2	0,4	5,7	0,5	9,0	0,7
sick leaves	5,6	4,0	13,2	7,8	11,4	6,9	17,3	5,7
holidays	36,0	36,6	33,8	35,2	28,8	30,2	30,8	33,8

This data has also been recalculated to show the average number of days of leave taken by men and women in each year. The average number of days was calculated as the number of days of a given type of leave in a given year for a given gender divided by the total number of persons of that gender employed in a given year, based on data from Table 1 and 3.

HR department – 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 5 Number of days spent at conferences or courses by gender, year and position.

Courses/conferences		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	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 6 Average number of days recalculated by number of people spent at conferences or courses by gender, year and position.

Courses/conferences		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	6,3	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		14	0,2	2,5	4,3	0,1	0,0	13	10
Administrative employees & other		0,0	0,0	18	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,8	0,0

The average number of days spent at conferences by men and women (Table 6), calculated as the number of days spent at conferences for a given gender and position in a given year (Table 5) 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 7 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	
	K - female	M - males	K - female	M - males	K - female	M - males	K - female	M - males
Researchers								
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 8 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	
	K - female	M - males	K - female	M - males	K - female	M - males	K - female	M - males
Researchers								
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 9 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	
	K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males
Researchers								
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).

The deputy director

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

Table 10 Number of persons of each gender in managerial positions and on committees and advisory bodies.

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

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 29% of the Scientific Council and between 23% and 40% of other advisory bodies.

The secretary office of 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	
	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
Withdrawal from studies	4	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Number of people that deffended PhD in current year	9	11	10	3	5	7	7	7
Distinction	6	3	5	2	2	3	4	2
%Distinction	0,67	0,27	0,50	0,67	0,40	0,43	0,57	0,29

For several years now, we have seen a higher number of women at the doctoral level, but this does not translate into growth at the next stages of career progression. When the data is analysed by the number of people of each gender who received a distinction in a given year divided by the number of people of each gender who defended in a given year (% of distinction), women are 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).

The grants department

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 12 Number of grants submitted by year by gender.

Number of submitted grants							
2021		2022		2023		2024	
K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males
no data	no data	19	54	40	36	33	58
Activity		0,21	0,38	0,53	0,27	0,32	0,39

Activity in Table 12 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.

Table 13 Number of grants received by year by gender.

Number of received grants							
2021		2022		2023		2024	
K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males	K - females	M - males
no data	no data	4	25	10	6	6	13
Success rate		0,21	0,46	0,25	0,17	0,18	0,22

The success rate in Table 13 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 two 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.

Additional considerations

The data collected by each department will be submitted to the GEP/IGEP Chair by the end of February each year.

In addition to the information mentioned in the specific sections above, the IGEP group decided that other data should be collected for the preparation of the 2025-2028 plan, including:

- recruitment data on the number of candidates of each gender at each stage of recruitment (applications submitted, selected for interview, hired)
- publication data - if possible, showing the number of publications as first, corresponding or secondary author, broken down by gender and year

3. Actions planned for the IGEP based on the execution of the previous GEP

3.1. Publication of the report from GEP actions during 2022-2024

A report will be prepared to summarise the actions that were proposed during the previous GEP and to provide further details on how those actions were implemented.

3.2. Statistical data collection

As stated in the section above, additional data (where possible) will be gathered for the IGEP proposed for the period of 2025-2028, including:

HR department data:

- whether sick leave is taken for the employee themselves or for the employee's child
- time between promotions broken down by gender and career stage
- information on the number of candidates of each gender at each stage of recruitment (applications submitted, selected for interview, hired)
- recruitment and employment data for major research projects

Secretary of PhD studies:

- duration of studies by gender
- information on the number of candidates of each gender at each stage of recruitment (applications submitted, selected for interview, hired)

Science evaluation officer:

- publication data - number of publications as first, corresponding or co-author, broken down by gender and year

3.3. Survey-based gender equality audit

Starting from 2025, members of the IChF PAN community will be asked to fill out an online Gender Equality Audit and Monitoring (GEAM) survey (<https://geam.act-on-gender.eu/>). The GEAM survey is a comprehensive system designed to facilitate survey-based gender equality audits within academic organizations or units. At its core is a versatile questionnaire framework derived from the Athena Survey of Science, Engineering, and Technology (ASSET) and established measurement scales from scientific literature. This framework includes a broad range of questions addressing key aspects of gender equality in academic settings, delivering high-quality data to inform the development and implementation of gender equality initiatives and to evaluate their long-term impact. The GEAM survey has been tested by the current GEP chair, takes 10-15 minutes to complete and provides additional information to the statistical data from the institution by capturing insights into perceptions, experiences and working conditions. It also provides an opportunity to gather anonymous information on the existence of minorities and problems that cannot be accessed through HR information.

3.4. Interview with focus groups carried out by external bodies

To ensure that the evaluation will be unbiased and that the focus group participants feel comfortable with the researcher, the evaluation is being outsourced to an external group of specialists. We contacted representatives of the INSPIRE project, funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 101058537. INSPIRE is developing innovative tools and knowledge to tackle intersecting inequalities across public and private sectors and geographical regions in Europe. The evaluation started in December 2024 and will be completed during the period of this Transition

Plan. Working with the INSPIRE project not only allows us to conduct professional interviews (the current chair is not qualified in this area), provides full anonymity for participants so they are more open and free to share any issues, but also gives the new IGEP group the opportunity to discuss the next plan with experts. The results of the analysis will form the basis of the new IGEP plan.

3.5. Leaflet about IGEP values for new employees of IChF PAN

The IGEP working group will prepare materials on IGEP values and corresponding IChF PAN policies to be shared with new employees. Employees will be required to confirm that they have been made aware of the material, in a fashion similar to that in which new employees undergo an initial health and safety training. This will ensure that all new members know their rights and where to go for help if they are mistreated.

3.6. Role models – a booklet and series of press notes

“Diversity of academic success” is a series of press notes, later forming a booklet based on some publications of this type, although mainly about women available at other institutions: (https://royalsociety.org/~media/Royal_Society_Content/about-us/equality/2011-06-15-Mothers-in-Science.pdf; <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/12152/AcademicWomenHere.pdf?sequence=9&isAllowed=y>)

The series describes 8 IChF staff members (6 women and 2 men) and consists of

- a press release, with professional photos, describing the scientific achievements and plans of each individual [Sections: scientific field; the scientific achievement of which the person is most proud; plans for the future]
- an e-book, which will be available in the new section of the Institute's "Equality, Diversity and Inclusion" website or intranet, focusing more on a personal journey, the problems the person has had to face, the good and the bad. The information will include some of the press release, but also anything personal that the person would like to share, things that researchers are passionate about, e.g. start-ups, popularising science, a hobby. [Sections: What do you think has been crucial to your career success? What aspects of your career have you found challenging? A timeline with key points in your scientific and personal life]

Although the interviews and pictures have been done, the prepared text was not accepted by the GEP working group and needs to be completely rewritten. Texts will be prepared by the new members of the IGEP working group and published during 2025, starting in April.

3.7. Inclusion of herstory in the celebration of 70 years of the Institute

On 4th June, the Institute will be celebrating its 70th anniversary, and the event will be marked with profiles on several prominent scientists from the Institute's history. There will be an equal number of male and female scientists, some of whom have already been selected:

- prof. Jerzy Herbich
- prof. Zbigniew Grabowski
- prof. Wiktor Kemula
- prof. Anna Grabowska
- prof. Wacława Palczewska
- prof. Barbara Behr

The manner of presentation of the scientists will be informal. Two internships have been offered to students from the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw to create designs for T-shirts and stickers presenting the above scientists in a more pop-scientific way.

3.8. Information campaign – posters

The recent health and safety campaign has had a positive impact on the laboratory safety measures adopted by the IChF PAN community. Following this example, the IGEP working group will prepare a poster campaign related to IGEP issues each semester. The poster campaigns will allow support to be shown to various minority groups but will also provide a means of disseminating information to those that are still reluctant to engage in IGEP activities. The campaigns will highlight various themes relevant to the scientific environment of IChF PAN, including gender discrimination, age discrimination, neurodiversity, disability rights, anti-racism, work-life balance and microaggressions.

3.8.1. “Need help?” poster campaign

The first poster campaign will be carried out during the transition period between the previous GEP and the new IGEP and will call attention to different bodies and processes created to help the employees at IChF PAN, including Ombudspersons, the Anti-Discrimination Committee, Career advisors, psychological help etc. The posters will be prepared by the IGEP group.

3.8.2. Poster competition

As there are no materials freely available on specific topics related to IGEP, such as microaggressions, benevolent sexism, age discrimination etc., especially in the context of the scientific community in the first half of 2025, a poster competition will be announced. The competition will be organised together with the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw for the information campaign on the topic selected by the IGEP group - benevolent sexism in scientific institutions. During the competition, students of the Academy of Fine Arts will be asked to prepare posters based on a briefing prepared by the IGEP group, describing examples of problems in the scientific environment and, if available, statistical data. Data will be gathered from: IChF PAN information collected by the IGEP group; scientific publications and information shared by members of the INSPIRE project. The winning posters will be displayed in the corridors of the Institute. Additional elements such as stickers or materials that can be shared on social media such as LinkedIn/Facebook may be included.

The jury of the competition will consist of 1-2 persons from the Academy of Fine Arts, 1-2 persons from IChF PAN, including one from the IGEP group, and one representative of the social sciences working on IGEP issues - in the next competition a member of the INSPIRE project. The Institute will award a gross prize of PLN 2,000 for the competition in spring 2025.

3.9. Information campaign -webpage

A dedicated web page will be added to the IChF PAN website to provide easy access to IGEP related materials and activities for the IChF PAN community. The webpage will include definitions of specific terms, links to recent reports on the topic, a booklet of role models, information on bodies and processes created to help IChF PAN staff and any necessary updates about current events and trainings.

4. Timeline

Date	Milestone
05.2025	1 st poster campaign – “Need help?”
05.2025	1 st poster competition – “Benevolent sexism in science”
05.2025	ICHF PAN community fills out the online GEAM questionnaire
05.2025	Publication of the report from GEP actions in 2022-2024
05.2025	End of evaluation by the Inspire project
05.2025	IGEP webpage launch
05.2025	1 st “Diversity of academic success” press note release
05-06.2025	Statistical data collection
06.2025	Herstory during the celebration of 70 years of the Institute
06.2025	Preparation of the termination questionnaire
06.2025	Preparation of the IGEP leaflet for new employees
06.2025	IGEP working group prepares the new plan for 01.10.2025-30.09.2028
06.2025	IGEP working group meets with the HR Excellence in Research Group, the Ombudspersons and representatives of the Anti-Discrimination Committee to discuss the new plan
06.2025	2 nd “Diversity of academic success” press note release
09.2025	IGEP working group schedules events for the upcoming year
09.2025	3 rd “Diversity of academic success” press note release
09.2025	2 nd poster campaign – “Benevolent sexism in science”