

Gender Equality Plan 2021-2027

The aim of the Gender Equality Plan (hereinafter *GEP*) of the Estonian Research Council (hereinafter also *Council*) is to ensure equal opportunities for all researchers and to guarantee a supportive work environment for the employees of the Council. We proceed from the principles of gender equality in all our activities without compromising on competence and quality. We wish to support all researchers in Estonia, irrespective of gender (as well as sexual orientation, nationality, age, and other characteristics), and believe that research will benefit the society the most if the background of the specialists involved in conducting and supporting research is as diverse as possible, and if the aspects of gender have also been taken into account in the research being carried out.

The current state of gender equality in Estonia, incl. in Estonian research, has not reached the equality of men and women in terms of their position and opportunities. There exists a great gender imbalance across academic positions¹, the proportion of women in the decision-making bodies regarding research policy is modest², and considerably more men apply for and receive research grants than women³. In order to improve the indicators of gender equality, it is imperative to tackle these issues systematically. The aim of the Estonian Research Council is to pay more attention to the aspects of gender in all its activities, and thus contribute to promoting gender equality in the Estonian research landscape.

The responsibility of promoting gender equality is shared by all of the departments of the Council. The GEP is based on interviews with the Directors of the Council and the Heads of Departments, a data analysis of the activities of the Council, and on the written recommendations as well as discussions between the employees. Specific activities for achieving the set objectives and the employees responsible for them shall be stipulated in the annual action plans. Meeting the set objectives will be covered in an annually updated report.

Subsequently, the objectives and underlying principles of the GEP, as well as the measures which will be proposed and adopted by the Council in order to meet the set objectives, have been listed. Proceeding from the activities and possibilities of the Council for improving the state of gender equality, the six main objectives for the time period 2021-2027 are as follows:

1. Raising gender awareness among the employees and among the members of the panels and committees of the Council
2. Adhering to the principles of equal treatment
3. Improving gender balance among the members of the panels, committees, and among other experts
4. Improving gender balance among the applicants and recipients of research grants, awards, and funding
5. Implementing a gender-sensitive communication strategy
6. Ensuring equal opportunities and a supportive work environment for the employees of the Council

¹ Only 24% of professors and 27% of leading researchers in Estonia are women. (2020)

² The share of women among the members of the Research and Development Council is 7%, among the members of Research Policy Committee 11% and among the members of Estonian Research Council's Evaluation Committee 37%. (2021)

³ In the application round PUT2021, 65% of the grant applicants and 63% of the grantees were men. (2021) (EE)

1. Raising gender awareness among the employees and among the members of the panels and committees of the Council

In order to make fair and inclusive decisions, gender awareness, incl. awareness of possible problems caused by unconscious bias, is of utmost importance for the members of the panels and committees, the management, and other employees of the Council. Increased awareness helps to prevent discrimination and ensures making fairer decisions. Gender awareness also contributes to achieving all of the other objectives of the Council's GEP.

For ensuring a better understanding of gender equality among the employees as well as among the members of the panels and committees of the Council, we will:

- Improve our competences regarding gender equality, incl. by organising and participating in training courses.
- Integrate the aspects of gender into the training courses we organise, if applicable.
- Assemble existing and compile new need-based information materials on gender equality, incl. materials on the importance of considering unconscious bias and integrating the gender dimension in research.
- Share our experiences, good practices, and developments regarding gender equality within our organisation, incl. in in-house seminars, workshops, etc.

2. Adhering to the principles of equal treatment

The Estonian Research Council supports equal treatment of all people, refraining from any form of discrimination based on gender (also from indirect discrimination, which occurs when seemingly neutral rules give an advantage to some researchers or target groups). Among other things, we pay particular attention to the impact that being on parental leave has on one's research career.

In order to ensure equal treatment, we will:

- Examine our rules and regulations to make sure that they ensure equal opportunities for everyone.
- Take into consideration a justified leave of absence from research, such as a parental leave or military service, in the preparatory materials relating to making decisions.
- Adhere to the principles of equal treatment and proceed only from established criteria when making decisions.
- Collect feedback on the adherence to the principles of equal treatment in the decision-making processes.

3. Improving gender balance among the members of the panels, committees, and among other experts

The aim of the Estonian Research Council is to reach the greatest possible gender balance among the members of the decision-making bodies, advisory bodies, and evaluation committees as well as among other experts working for the Council, without compromising the competence of the experts.

Among the members of the panels and committees, we consider the representation of the underrepresented gender of at least 40% to be a good gender balance. When convening field-specific

panels, the gender proportions of various research fields is a further factor to be taken into account: in case of research fields dominated by one gender, the underrepresented gender has to be, if at all possible, represented in the decision-making body in the same proportion as it is in the general population of that research field. We will keep this principle in mind when convening our panels.

In order to achieve a greater gender balance among the members of the panels, committees, and other experts, we will:

- Consciously pay more attention to gender when searching for the experts.
- Prefer a candidate of underrepresented gender if the candidates are of equal standing.
- In case decision-making bodies are formed of experts nominated by other institutions, we consider, among other factors, gender diversity in the final selection of members.
- Compile statistical overviews and guidelines highlighting the aspects of gender in the process of searching for the members of the panels and other experts in order to acknowledge the issue more widely.

4. Improving gender balance among the applicants and recipients of research grants, awards, and funding

The aim of the Estonian Research Council is to improve gender balance among the applicants and recipients of research grants, funding, and awards.

In order to achieve a greater gender balance among the applicants and recipients of research grants, funding, and awards, we will:

- Present the information regarding research funding calls and contests in an inclusive and gender-neutral manner.
- Monitor the gender distribution and success rates among the applicants and recipients of research grants, awards, and funding.
- Present gender-disaggregated data of the applicants and recipients of research grants, awards, and funding on the website of the Council.
- Draw the attention of the decision-makers to possible unconscious bias and to the importance of considering the aspects of gender.

5. Implementing a gender-sensitive communication strategy

One of the key roles of the Estonian Research Council is communicating with the society at large, incl. sharing information with researchers and R&D institutions as well as promoting research among children and grown-ups. Gender equality will also be promoted through communication activities. We will remain gender-aware in all our channels of communication and will:

- Monitor our use of language and refrain from reproducing gender stereotypes, incl. when using visual materials.
- Proceed from the principles of gender diversity when writing press releases, news, profile articles, etc.
- Try to ensure gender balance among the speakers at public events, if at all possible. As is the case with decision-making bodies, we consider the representation of the underrepresented gender of at least 40% to be a good gender balance.

- Emphasise the need to underline the aspects of gender in various materials and statistics: the data, wherever relevant, will be disaggregated by gender.
- Regularly publish the core indicators of gender equality in research on our website.

<p>6. Ensuring equal opportunities and a supportive work environment for the employees of the Council</p>

Pleasant work environment, good working conditions, and a diverse team are important for the effective functioning of an organisation and for employee satisfaction. In terms of gender equality, we will:

- Monitor the gender distribution among the employees, incl. across different positions. Prefer a candidate of underrepresented gender if the candidates are of equal standing in the recruitment process. Everyone, regardless of gender and other characteristics, are welcome to apply for a position.
- Proceed from the principle that each employee will receive a fair remuneration that is both internally and externally equitable. The remuneration and possible pay gap across different positions is analysed annually.
- Consider the needs of the employees to maintain a good work-life balance: offer flexible working arrangements and, if necessary, allow working from home or working part time. For employees returning after parental leave, we offer the possibility of gradual workload restoration, if needed.
- Pay attention to the psychological and physical safety of the employees. We have zero tolerance for acts of workplace bullying and harassment, incl. gender-based violence. We will complement our organisation guidelines with a chapter on equal opportunities and appoint an employee to deal with cases of workplace bullying, harassment and discrimination. Should such cases occur, we ensure the discretion of the victim and access to professional help, if needed.
- Support the personal development and career progression of all employees, regardless of gender and other characteristics. It is possible for the employees to participate in specialised training courses and equal opportunities for career advancement are guaranteed for all employees.

The first version of the GEP has been reviewed by the Management of the Council on 15 September 2020. The GEP is being regularly reviewed and updated, if needed. The current version has been approved by the management of the Estonian Research Council on 13 December 2024.

The Department of Strategic Analysis is responsible for the implementation of the GEP. For the implementation, resources are allocated and a responsible expert at the Estonian Research Council is appointed. Information on the implementation can be found on the webpage of the Council. The implementation report is updated on a yearly basis.