

Equality Plan 2023–2024

The FWF Strategy for Gender Equality and Diversity in Research

Vienna, April 1, 2023

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1 Vision

The FWF's mission statement describes its vision, objectives, and principles in the context of funding top-level research in Austria. Equal opportunities, gender mainstreaming, transparency, and fairness, as well as independence and diversity are anchored in this statement as fundamental pillars of research funding.

The FWF's fair and transparent procedures support equal opportunities and gender equality for researchers in the national research community. The FWF Strategy defines measures intended to, among other things, significantly increase the number of high-potential applications from the underrepresented gender, currently especially from women researchers.

For the FWF, creating equal opportunities also means promoting gender equality while also recognizing the diversity of researchers and the diversity of research ideas and concepts.

2 Background

Objective 3 of the current RTI Strategy 2030¹ states that the Austrian RTI landscape needs to focus on knowledge, talents, and skills. To achieve this goal, we need to develop and support our human resources and help researchers and students develop an international outlook. We also need to continue focusing on increasing gender equality and diversity in R&D and making research careers an attractive and feasible option, especially for women, by strengthening equal opportunity programs and measures in personnel development and career planning. Gender and diversity aspects also need to be considered in research funding, to help lower barriers to equal opportunities and participation.

As the supervisory authority of the FWF, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) recommends a three-dimensional approach to equality in line with the ERA (European Research Area) objectives:^{2,3,4}

- 1) Balanced gender ratio in all areas and at all hierarchical levels
- 2) Reduction of structural barriers

¹ https://era.gv.at/public/documents/4489/RTI_Strategy_2030-1-1.pdf

² Council of the European Union (2012). Conclusions on 'A reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth.' Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/intm/134168.pdf

³ Council of the European Union (2015). Advancing gender equality in the European Research Area - Council https://era.gv.at/object/document/1845/attach/ERA_Roadmap_st01208_en15.pdf. Available at: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14846-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

⁴ ERAC Opinion on the European Research Area Roadmap 2015-2020 https://era.gv.at/object/document/1845/attach/ERA_Roadmap_st01208_en15.pdf

3) Establishing the gender dimension in research and research-led teaching

In addition, EU reports⁵ have identified the need to incorporate gender equality policy objectives and their implementation into the organizational strategy. Strong support on the part of an organization's management paves the way for the implementation of such strategies and the attainment of their objectives. Clear external communication also helps to achieve these effects.

The legal basis of the FWF's activities is the Research and Technology Funding Act (FTFG). In §2b,⁶ this legislation defines the funding of scientific and scholarly research projects by any appropriate means for one or several natural or legal persons as one of the FWF's duties.

The principles and standards described below, as well as an action plan drawn up in accordance with the requirements of the "EU Horizon Europe" criteria for funding, have been established to help the FWF attain specific institution-wide objectives with regard to diversity, equal opportunities, and gender equality among the researchers it funds.⁷ This important step forward in the FWF's research policy complements its previous activities⁸ on this topic.

3 FWF Principles on Gender Equality and Diversity

- Ensuring equal opportunities⁹ for researchers is one of the FWF's key concerns. The FWF strives to achieve a balanced participation of all representatives of the research community in its decision-making bodies, functions, and decision-making processes, as well as in its programs, whether as applicants or principal investigators. An intersectional approach (integrating social dimensions such as age, gender, social background, disability, etc.) is taken with regard to researcher diversity.^{10,11}
- The FWF also supports research that specifically targets sex-specific and gender-relevant aspects in the research approach where relevant, in addition to appropriate participation of the underrepresented gender in the research team.
- The FWF takes a cross-sectional approach to gender equality, implementing this approach in all its activities (gender mainstreaming and FWF gender equality standards).

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/structural-changes-final-report_en.pdf; http://bookshop.europa.eu/is-bin/INTERSHOP.enfinity/WFS/EU-Bookshop-Site/en_GB/-/EUR/ViewPublication-Start?PublicationKey=KINA26565; <http://www.gender-net.eu/spip.php?article55&lang=en> (D.2.8)

⁶ [Legal foundations of the FWF](#)

⁷ [Gender Equality in Academia and Research - What is a Gender Equality Plan?](#) or [Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans](#)

⁸ <https://www.fwf.ac.at/de/ueber-den-fwf/gender-mainstreaming/>

⁹ [FWF Strategic Plan 2017–2020](#)

¹⁰ [Intersektionalität – eine Einführung](#), Katharina Walgenbach

¹¹ FWF in-house workshop on "Diversity and Research Funding," November 27, 2015, Vienna

- The implementation of gender equality is one of the primary management responsibilities of the FWF Executive Board.
- The FWF sets gender equality objectives and regularly monitors their attainment (e.g., gender-specific participation and success rates of male and female researchers in different programs).
- The FWF develops fair and transparent processes¹² with appropriate checks and balances in order to avoid unconscious bias towards any group of researchers.
- The exchange of information with research policy initiatives on both national and international levels promotes mutual learning in areas such as structural and process-related barriers for subgroups of applicants.
- As part of its public image, all of the FWF's in-house and external communications are gender sensitive. Making the underrepresented gender clearly visible, currently with a special focus on women researchers in the context of FWF funding, is very important to the FWF.
- In order to achieve gender equality, specific actions will be taken where necessary to compensate for existing disadvantages.

¹² Two external evaluations of the FWF's decision-making process have shown that gender, age, and disciplinary background have no effect on the probability of approval: [Factors influencing the probability of approval in the FWF decision-making process. \(in German\) FWF Stand-Alone Projects in the years 1999 to 2008 and 2010 to 2019](#)

4 FWF Equality & Diversity Action Plan (2023–2024)

4.1 Measures

In the following section, existing and planned measures of the Equal Opportunities in Research Funding office are presented in the context of FWF processes.

4.1.1 FWF organization

- Staff position for the Equal Opportunities in Research Funding office since 2005 (with 1 full-time equivalent)
- Publication of the Equality Plan (EP), the FWF Strategy for Gender Equality and Diversity in Research
- Use of inclusive, gender-sensitive language in in-house and external communications (based on in-house guidelines)
- Signing the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment¹³ (DORA) and the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment¹⁴
- Equal opportunity monitoring: annual and long-term gender-specific data collection with regard to applications, grants, FWF's executive bodies, FWF review procedures
- Networking and knowledge transfer:
 - FWF in-house gender working group for interdepartmental communication and information exchange
 - National exchange through participation in a cross-agency gender working group and with external research organizations
 - International exchange on a regular basis with funding organizations such as DFG, SNF, Science Europe, and GRC
- Participation in EU programs and EU projects:
 - EU Cofund GENDER-NET Plus¹⁵
 - EU project on gender inequalities in research funding: GRANteD¹⁶

¹³ [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#)

¹⁴ Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment: [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#) and [signatories](#)

¹⁵ [Cofunded Call - GENDER-NET Plus \(gender-net-plus.eu\)](#)

¹⁶ EU research project [GRANteD – Publications: GRANteD Equality Policy & Gender Bias Risk Analysis](#)

4.1.2 The application process

- A mandatory reflection on gender and gender dimensions in the research approach has been integrated as part of the application process:
 - Information and materials for researchers (checklist, materials: videos, etc.)
- Requirement for researchers: 30% participation of the underrepresented gender in the programs Clusters of Excellence, Special Research Areas, Research Groups, doc.funds, and doc.funds.connect
- Advancing the next generation of junior-level women researchers: 50% of funding is reserved for women in the ESPRIT program
- Inclusion: Career breaks and appropriate exceptions are taken into account in the application process
- Coaching workshops (knowledge transfer as part of FWF processes; events aimed specifically at women)

4.1.3 Peer review procedure

- Based on the criteria of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), of which the FWF is a signatory, as well as the EU position paper Reforming Research Assessment, the use of journal-based metrics such as journal impact factors are not considered when evaluating research performance, and academic rather than biological age is considered when assessing applicants' qualifications.
- Raising awareness of unconscious bias:
 - Continuation of FWF in-house bias training
 - Providing reviewers with information on unconscious bias and including references in reviewer forms

4.1.4 Project implementation

- Career-specific measures to compensate for existing disadvantages and raise awareness of equality-related aspects during the implementation of projects:
 - Child allowance¹⁷ (in ESPRIT, Special Research Areas, Clusters of Excellence)
 - Additional funds for further qualification (€2000/year for women principal investigators)

¹⁷ Principal investigators who are employed full-time after the birth of a child may apply for a child allowance up to the child's third birthday.

- Additional funding for gender equality measures and measures that promote gender and diversity competence, and for career development activities focusing on gender equality (Special Research Areas and Clusters of Excellence)
- Monitoring of research project staff
- Researchers are required to integrate gender and sex-specific dimensions in research in all programs

4.1.5 Increasing the visibility of women researchers

- Portrait articles published in the FWF Science Magazine *scilog*¹⁸ describe projects carried out by women researchers
- Project funding/awards: Events aimed specifically at women¹⁹ increase the visibility of women researchers and allow academically younger women to network with established women researchers in Austria.
- Academia Net²⁰ lists women researchers from different disciplines

4.2 A look ahead: Equal Opportunities in Research Funding office

- The FWF website is scheduled to be updated by June 2023 (gender-sensitive language, diversity and equal opportunities, updated information for researchers and reviewers on bias and the gender dimension in research).
- In-house, the activities of the Equal Opportunities in Research Funding office should be further integrated into FWF processes in line with the gender mainstreaming approach.
- Guidelines for dealing with harassment and discrimination in FWF-funded projects are being drafted.

On behalf of the FWF
Christof GATTRINGER, President

Vienna, 23rd May 2023
City, date

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¹⁸ [Portraits](#)

¹⁹ [An Evening Honoring Women in Cutting-Edge Research: Eimberg-Richter Award Ceremony](#)

²⁰ [Portal to Excellent Women Academics](#)