

Endorsed by ICECHIM Management Board
(Consiliul de Administratie)

President
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Gender Equality Strategy and Gender Equality Plan 2022-2025

of the **National Institute for Research and Development in
Chemistry and Petrochemistry - ICECHIM**

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Abbreviations and definitions

GE	Gender equality
GEP	Gender equality plan
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
GD	General Director
SD	Scientific Director
CD	Directors' Committee (Comitet de Direcție)
CA	Management Board (Consiliul de Administrație)
ICECHIM	National Institute for Research & Development in Chemistry and Petrochemistry ICECHIM
GEWG	Gender Equality Working Group
Sex	Either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that are distinguished respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/)
Gender	The behavioural, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/)
Sex vs Gender	A clear delineation between sex and gender is typically prescribed, with sex as the preferred term for biological forms, and gender limited to its meanings involving behavioural, cultural, and psychological traits. In this dichotomy, the terms male and female relate only to biological forms (sex), while the terms masculine/masculinity, feminine/femininity, woman/girl, and man/boy relate only to psychological and sociocultural traits (gender) (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/)

Introduction

The Gender Equality (GE) strategy for 2022-2025 was developed by the National Institute for Research & Development in Chemistry and Petrochemistry - ICECHIM with the participation of the employees and for the benefit of its entire staff. The GE strategy was built on the provisions of the European Charter for researchers and of the Code of Conduct in the process of the recruitment of researchers¹, 2015-2019, the European Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025² and the Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans³.

In Romania, GE has a strong background, as it has been promoted and actively pursued during over 40 years of communist regime, and remained in place ever since. During the last 70 years, women were encouraged to seek employment and were granted equal rights as men, so gender discrimination at the workplace is not perceived as an important issue in the Romanian society in general. Moreover, gender discrimination is forbidden by national legislation (Law 202/2002 on equal chances and treatment for women and men, republished, with its subsequent amendments and completions, Law 53/2003 Labour code) while the Constitution of Romania specifies that man and women should receive equal payment for similar work.

ICECHIM is an equal opportunities employer that makes permanent efforts to create conditions for a good balance between career and private life. The motivation for developing the GE strategy is to ensure that our R&D institute is a safe place for everyone, and all activities and processes that take place follow the principles of equal chances, diversity, inclusiveness and non-discrimination.

Based on the GE strategy, ICECHIM developed the GE Plan (GEP) for 2022-2025, with specific actions and measures, as well as indicators for measuring progress of its implementation and revisions.

Enforcing its mission and values, the GE strategy and the GEP of the ICECHIM institute ensure and promote equality and diversity to knowledge and the acquisition of skills for all. The objectives of the GE strategy are implemented through specific actions that aim at safeguarding an equal and inclusive organizational culture and promoting gender-equality at all levels. As such, the GE strategy and the GEP will pro-actively enable, gender equality awareness raising, skills and competences; gender balance in decision-making structures

¹ https://cdn2.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/policy_library/ttf_goal_2_results_v1.0.pdf

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

³ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffcb06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1>

and processes, including recruitment; gender equality in research; and integrating the gender dimension in the entire research process.

I. Review of requirements, policies and case studies

Prior to developing the GE strategy and the GEP, the management of the National Institute for Research and Development in Chemistry and Petrochemistry – ICECHIM appointed a Working Group (WG) to conduct a literature review of the existing requirements, policies, recommendations, examples and case studies pertinent to discrimination, inclusiveness and gender equality, with a special focus on research performing organisations (RPOs).

The main resources informing the literature review are listed in the Annex.

II. Diagnosis (data collection and analysis)

II.1. Data collection

The following indicators were selected at the research institute ICECHIM as relevant for the discussion on gender equality issues:

- Staff numbers by sex/gender at all levels (including administrative / support staff)
- Numbers of staff by sex/gender applying for/taking parental leave, for how long and how many returned after taking the leave.

II.1.1. Women and men in leadership positions

Table 1. ICECHIM management

Top Management position	Woman	Man
President of CA and CD/ General Director	✓	-
Scientific Director	-	✓
President of Scientific Committee	✓	
Economic Director	✓	
Technical Director		✓
Quality Manager	✓	
TOTAL	4	2

Table 2. Other Heads of ICECHIM research institute structures / units (independent units, other than research):

Middle Management positions	Woman	Man
Head of CTT	✓	
Head of IT		✓
Head of Financial Accounting	✓	
Head of Procurement	✓	
Head of Projects' Monitoring	✓	
Union Leader		✓
TOTAL	4	2

II.1.2. Women and men – research staff

Table 3. Total number of ICECHIM research staff, per research teams

Department	Experienced researchers (CS I, CS II, CS III)	Early -stage researchers (CS and ACS)	Total women	Total men
Research team 1 Advanced Polymer materials and polymer recycling	6	6	12	
	2	1		3
Research team 2 Alternative Bioresources and Biofuels	9	3	12	
	3	5		8
Research team 4 Bioproducts	3	12	15	
	2	3		5
Research team 5 Analysis, tests and testing laboratory	4	4	8	
	2	0		2
Research team 6 Biotechnology & bioanalysis	5	1	6	
	1	1		2
Research team 7 Emerging nanotechnologies	3	2	5	
	1	1		2
Research team 8 Multiphase materials	2	0	2	
	1	0		1

Research team 9 Heterogeneous systems	4	3	7	
	1	1		2
Research team 10 Functional dyes and related materials	4	2	6	
	1	0		1
Research team 11 Evaluation and conservation of cultural heritage	5	2	7	
	2	3		5
Research team 12 Polymeric composites and nanocomposites	4	2	6	
	2	1		3
Research team 13 Cryo-TEM electron microscopy	1	0	1	
	2	0		2
Total women			87	
Total men			36	

II.1.3. Women and men – administrative and support services

Table 4. Total number of women and men in administrative and support services

	Women	Men
General Manager office (Assistant Manager)	1	0
Librarian	1	0
Marketing, Communication, Public Relations and Mass-Media	1	0
Quality Management	2	0
Industrial Property	0	1
Legal Office	1	0
Counsellors	1	0
Projects' Monitoring	2	0
Procurement	4	0
Building administration	3	6
Human Resources	2	0
Work Safety and Environmental Protection	1	1
Accounting	5	0
Internal Audit	0	1
TOTAL	24	9

As part of data collection and diagnosis, the appointed GE Working Group conducted an institute-wide survey with the following indicators:

- Perception (opinion) regarding inclusiveness and discrimination at the research institute
- Opinions on the work-life balance in the research institute
- Numbers of staff by sex/gender applying for/taking parental leave, for how long and how many returned after taking the leave
- Perception of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment in the research institute
- Number of years needed for women and men to make career advancements after fulfilling minimum legal requirements
- Integration of the gender dimension into research content

II.2. Data analysis

II.2.1. Quantitative analysis of data

In order to analyse the gender equality perception within the institute, ICECHIM had organised an anonymous internal survey during the period 7-21.02.2022. The questionnaire included 8 multiple choice questions, of which questions 1-5 were addressed to all employees and questions 6-8 only to researchers.

As of 31.12.2021, ICECHIM had 164 employees, out of which 113 female and 51 male. Out of the total number of employees, 129 are involved in research and 35 in administrative duties (Table 5).

Table 5. Structure of ICECHIM staff (august 2022)

ICECHIM Staff	Female	Male	Total
Research and Development	89	40	129
Administration and support	24	11	35
TOTAL	113	51	164

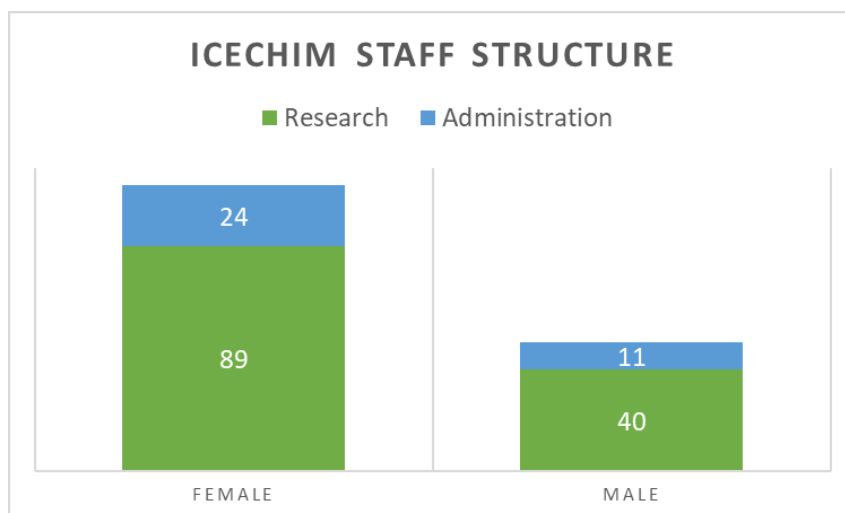


Figure 1. ICECHIM Staff Structure

The gender imbalance in staff distribution is not a result of the institute's policy, but mostly because of the scientific profile, as in Romania most chemistry graduates are female.

The questionnaires were distributed individually, upon signature, but were collected anonymously, in a box placed on the hallway. 122 employees picked up the questionnaire.

A total number of 110 forms were received back, of which 1 was empty, 1 had inconsistent answers, and several were incomplete. The empty questionnaire was removed from the analysis.

Analysis of responses

Please specify your gender:

Female: 71 (62.83% of female employees)

Male: 32 (62.75% of male employees)

Other/not willing to reply: 6

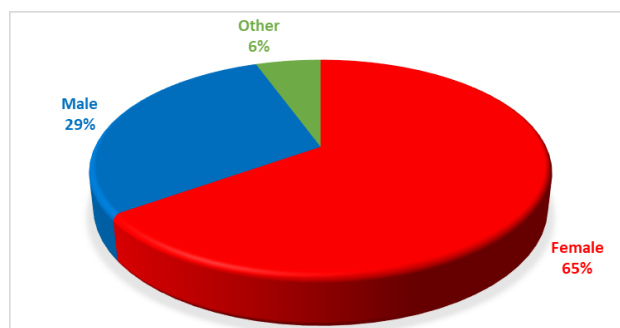


Figure 2. Gender distribution of replies

Percentages of replies from female and male employees are very similar, so we can conclude that all genders were well represented in the survey. Also, the distribution of collected responses is in good agreement with the general distribution of employees by gender.

Table 6. Distribution of responses to the survey

ICECHIM Staff	Female	Male	Female replies	Male replies	Other replies
Research	89	40	53	27	5
Administration	24	11	18	5	1

Question 1: To what extent do you believe that there is gender discrimination in the institute?

Very low					Very high
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	
71.2%	14.4%	8.7%	2.9%	2.9%	

Out of the 109 forms that were received, 5 did not answer question 1, of which 3 female and 2 male. 85.6% of the answers indicated that the gender discrimination is perceived as very low or low, and only 2.9% believe it is very high. The answers appear to have a similar distribution between men and women, but differ in the case of those who did not wish to reveal their gender (Figure 3). Based on the replies, we conclude that a wide majority of employees believe that gender discrimination is very low in the institute, so no further action will be taken in this field for the time being. The issue will continue to be monitored in the future, in order to preserve the present status.

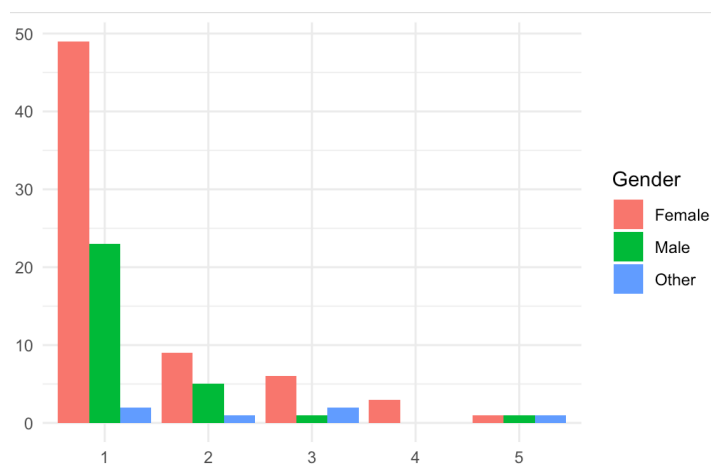


Figure 3 Answers distribution for question 1

Question 2. To what extent do you believe that the institute offers opportunities for a good balance between career and private life?

Very low					Very high
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	
13.3%	12.4%	22.9%	26.7%	24.8%	

More than 50% of the answers indicate that the opportunities for a good balance between work and private life are “very high” and “high”.

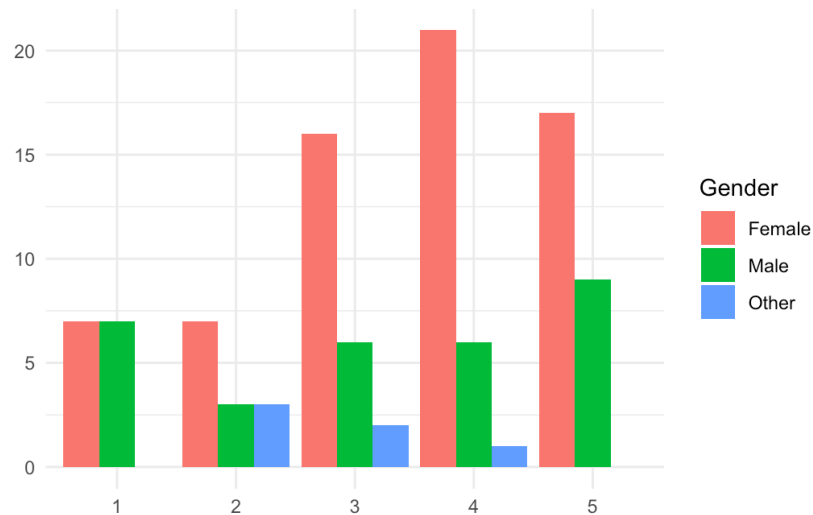


Figure 4 Answers distribution for question 2

There appears to be a difference of perception between men and women regarding the balance between work and private life, namely that women seem to be more satisfied than man in this respect. This an area where measures for improvement could be considered, although the choice between career and private life is often a personal one. The institute offers flexible working hours to researchers and administrative staff are very rarely asked to work extra hours. The “flexible program” policy will be constantly presented to the employees.

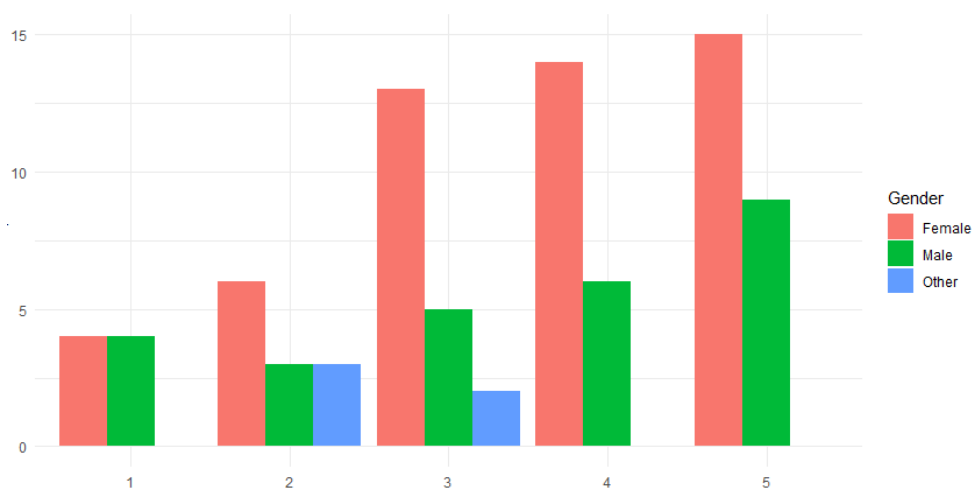


Figure 5 Researchers answers distribution for question 2

The answers of the researchers show a similar distribution, but in this case male responders seem to be more satisfied with the balance between work and private life.

Questions 3 and 4 were addressed to people who had children while being employed with ICECHIM, took parental leave and came back to work.

Question 3: In case you took a parental leave, please specify the cumulative period in months

20 persons answered this question and the answers ranged between 3 and 48 months. Most of the answers (15) reported a leave period of 13-24 months, 3 answered 0-12 months and 2 answered 37-48 months. The fact the most answers were in the 13-24 range indicates that parents are confident to take a long leave and have their jobs secured during this period.

19 answers came from women, while 1 answer came from a man who claimed to have been on a 12 months parental leave, although we have no records of such a case.

The maximum parental leave in Romania for one child is 24 months (with some medical exceptions, in which case the maximum parental leave is 36 months), and men are entitled (one of the parents may choose to take the leave), but usually it is the mother who takes the leave. This is a normal situation in Romania and does not call for any corrective measure.

Question 4: How easy was it to come back to work at the institute after the parental leave?

Very difficult					Very easy
1 □	2 □	3 □	4 □	5 □	
14.8%	3.7%	22.2%	33.3%	23.9%	

To this question we received a number of answers from people who did not specify for how long they went on parental leave (men and unspecified gender), so we believe the results may have been flawed. However, more than 57% indicated that it was “easy” and “very easy” to come back to work, and less than 20% found it “difficult” or “very difficult”, so it may also be a matter of personal situation. The ICECHIM GEWG group concluded that no measure is required in this field, at institutional level.

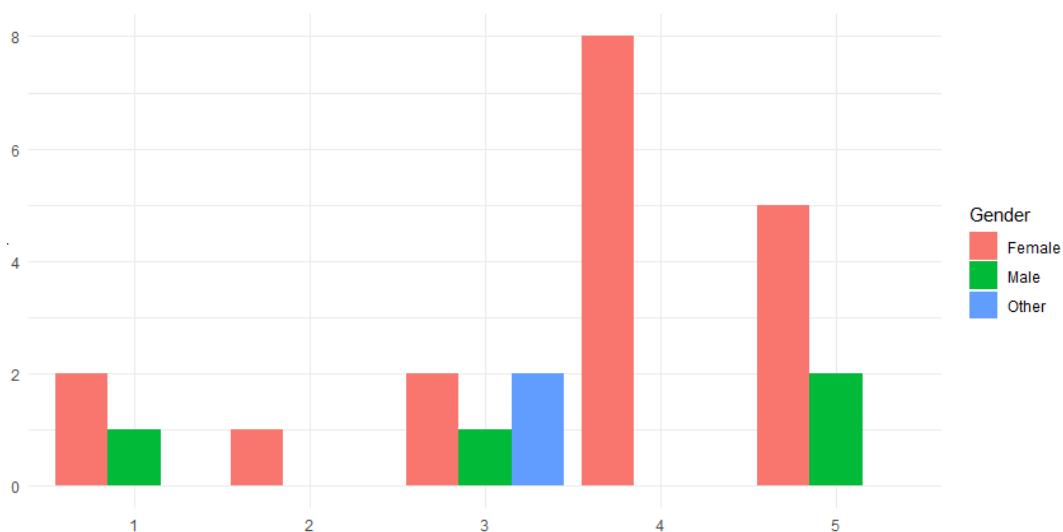


Figure 6. Distribution of answers to Question 4

Question 5: Do you believe that during your work at ICECHIM you were subject to:

- a) Violence physical verbal
- b) Sexual harassment
- c) Gender discrimination
- d) Gender exclusion / marginalisation
- e) Not applicable

To this question, 68 persons replied “Not applicable”, 29 reported “Verbal violence”, 7 reported both “Verbal violence” and “Gender discrimination”, and 1 reported “Verbal violence”, “Gender discrimination” and “Sexual harassment”. While we take the replies very seriously, the person who reported “Sexual harassment” also claimed he was a man, taking 12 months parental leave, and chose the worst options for all the questions. It is obviously a dissatisfied person, but since a parental leave for a man could not be verified, we feel entitled to question all his other answers.

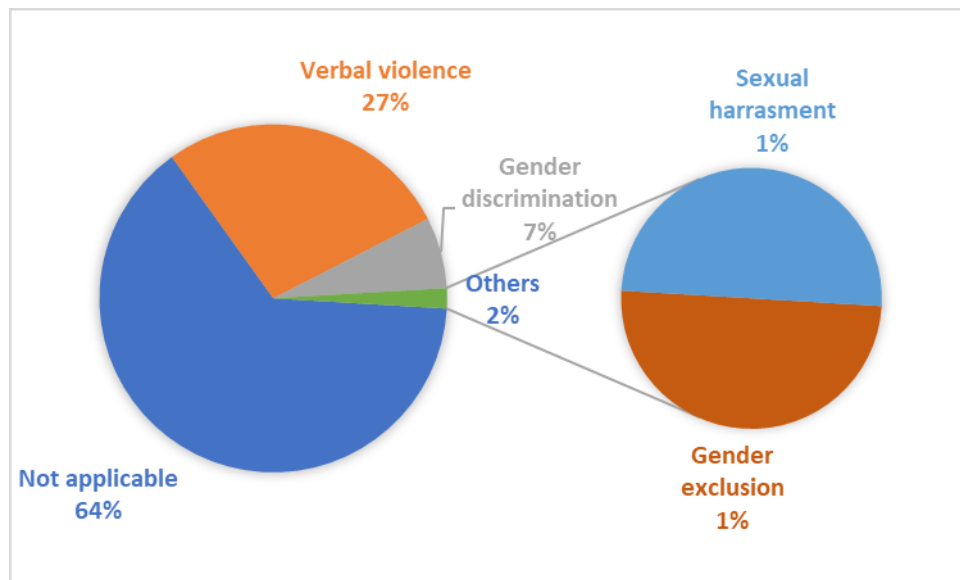


Figure 7 Answers distribution to question 5

There was no report of physical violence and only 1 of gender exclusion / marginalisation.

Verbal violence is an issue and is forbidden by the internal code of conduct, so measures should be taken to encourage reporting and penalties should be applied for abusive behaviour.

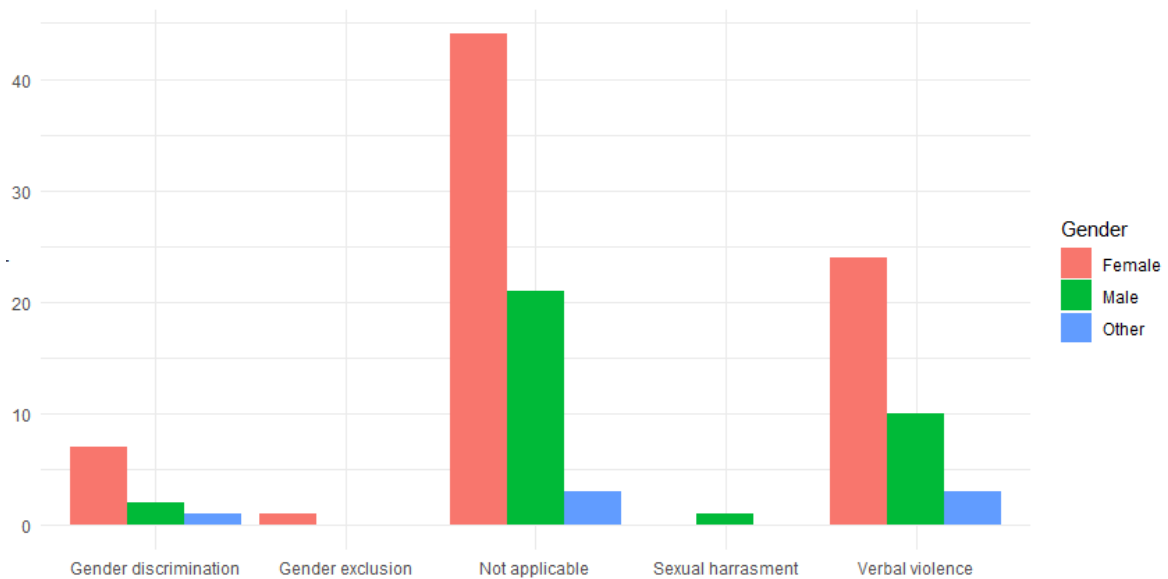


Figure 8. Distribution of answers to Question 5

The gender distribution of answers shows very similar patterns, so obviously the reported issues do not indicate gender discrimination. For instance, verbal violence is perceived by all genders to a similar extent, as well as gender discrimination. They are not felt mostly by one gender or another. However, the situation requires continuous monitoring and measures for improvement.

Additional questions for researchers

Question 6. To what extent do you believe that the advance in the career / scientific degree is supported (within the institute):

Very low			Very high	
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
11.76%	9.41%	16.47%	24.71%	37.65%

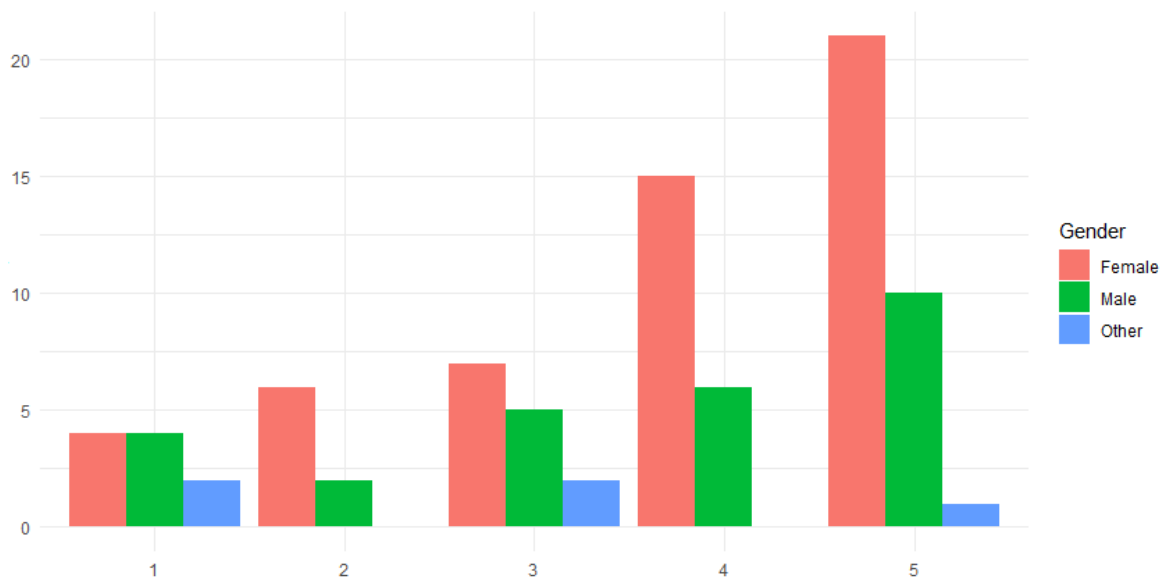


Figure 9. Answers distribution to Question 6

Most of the answers (62.35%) indicate that researchers felt that the opportunities to advance in their career are „high” and „very high”. There appears to be a slight difference between men and women, where women seem to be more confident in their career progress than men.

Question 7. If possible, please estimate the number of years required for promotion to a higher scientific degree, in addition from the moment when all minimum legal requirements are met by you or your research fellow: years

The answers ranged between 0 and 10 years, with a mean value of 1.6 years and a median of 1.

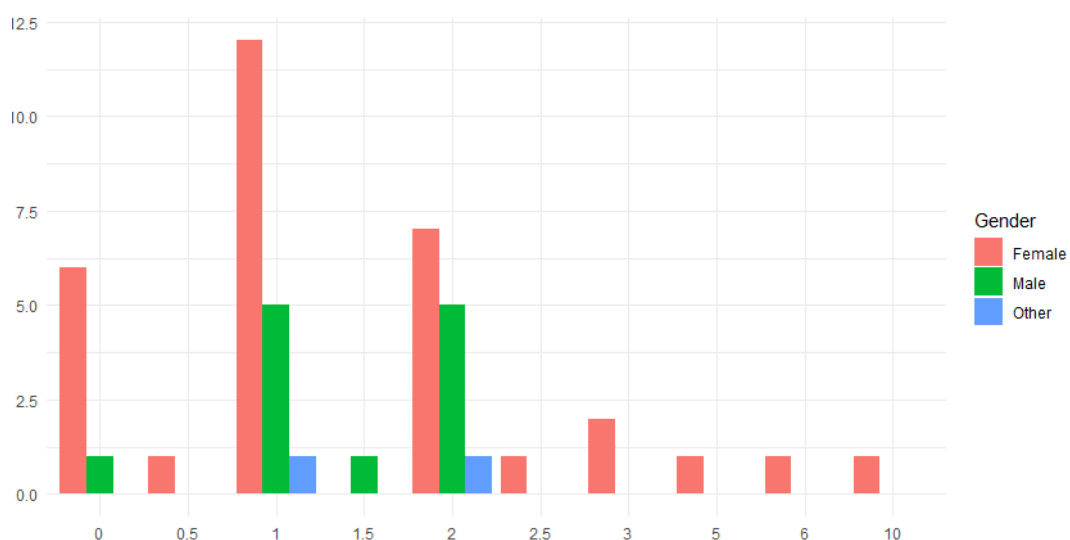
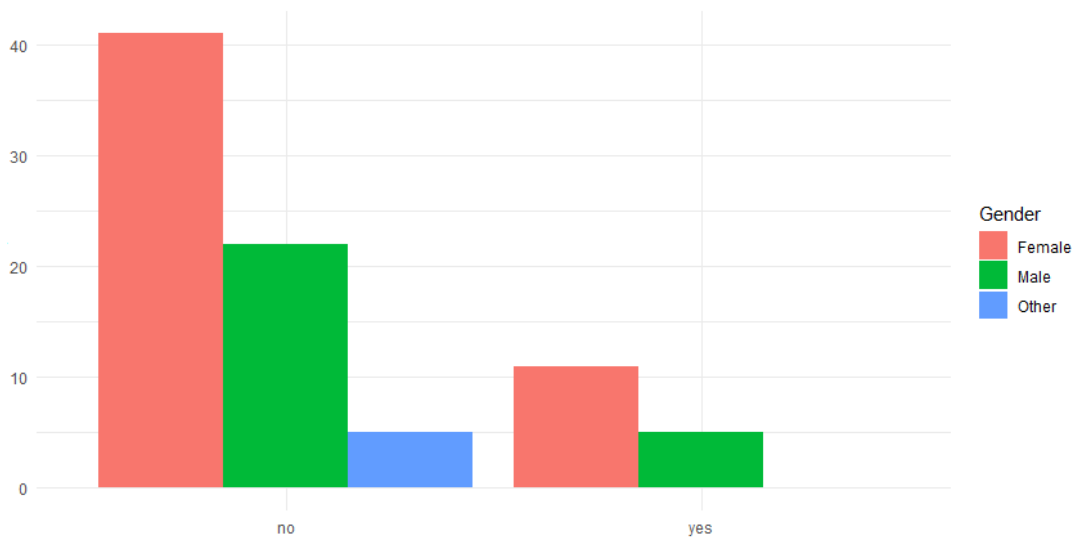


Figure 10. Answers distribution to question 7

In this case, the answers indicating a long period of time to advance in the scientific career came from women, which is a matter that requires further attention.

Question 8. Do you believe that gender aspects are relevant in your field of research:

Yes No
16 68



Most of the researchers (81%) believe that gender aspects are not relevant for their research, and the distribution of answers is similar between all genders. This is because the research topics of the institute are related to chemistry and materials science, in which gender does not play a role.

The analysis of numerical data illustrated that:

- The institute has more female employees because of its scientific profile, but there is almost no perception of gender discrimination among staff.
- The institute offers good opportunities for career development and a good balance between career and personal life.

II.2.2. Qualitative analysis of data

The qualitative research showed that:

- The ICECHIM is overall perceived as inclusive, with very low gender discrimination.
- Combining work and family life – women are slightly more satisfied with the balance between career and private life than men, but in general there’s a consistent degree

of satisfaction. There is room for improvement in this field, and further enquiries may reveal directions of actions to be taken by the management.

- Young mothers tend to take the maximum parental leave and find it easy to reintegrate in the working place.
- The research institute is generally perceived as a safe place, but there's a high rate of non-gender related verbal violence (27%). The internal Code of Conduct forbids any type of violence, but apparently more enforcement measures are required.
- ICECHIM offers good opportunities for career advancement, but some women reported long periods of time needed for promotion after fulfilling all legal requirements. This issue has to be further investigated by team leaders by analysing records of employment and scientific performance within their respective research team, and check if perhaps the question was misunderstood.
- The gender dimension is not perceived by researchers to be relevant for the institute's field of research (chemistry).

To summarize the results of the studies, it can be noted that there's a very good gender balance at the institute's level and gender discrimination is very low.

ICECHIM will maintain its equal opportunities and non-discrimination policy, while continuing to improve conditions for balance between career and private life.

The conclusions of the internal audit were then analysed by the CD, approved by the CA, and then communicated to the entire research institute staff.

With mandate from the CA, the General Director committed to the development and implementation of the GEP for ICECHIM, for 2022-2025.

III. GE strategy and GEP

Based on the internal review and the national and European policies and requirements, CA and the General Director committed to developing ICECHIM's strategy for gender equality for 2022-2025, and the corresponding GEP.

The CD of INCDC-ICECHIM decided that, based on the results of the survey and the fact that gender discrimination is perceived as very low at institute level, current policies regarding recruitment, employment, promotion and work - private life balance should be maintained. The appointed Working Group will continue to assess the gender balance and employees' perception on an annual basis, so that measures can be taken once imbalances emerge.

The institute management mandated a dedicated working group to further develop the GE strategy and the GEP 2022-2025, which will be revised/updated every year. The GE working group included men and women representatives of research institute leadership and researchers, representatives of research institute administration and support.

III.1. GE Strategy 2022-2025

ICECHIM's GE Strategy is articulated in the framework set by the European Institute for Gender Equality considering the body of best practices in terms of removal of specific gender inequalities and support to gender equality.

The GE Strategy comprises the following **areas of intervention and objectives for 2022-2025**:

Area of intervention	Objective(s)
1. Work-life balance and organisational culture	Promoting integration of work with family and personal life
2. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making	Promoting gender equality in the institutional culture, processes and practice
3. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression	Promoting processes to ensure equal opportunities in recruitment, career and appointments
4. Integration of the gender dimension into research content	Promoting the integration of a sex and gender perspective in research activity, when applicable.
5. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment	Raising awareness about the importance of equality issues and strengthening positive attitudes towards diversity

III.2. GE Plan 2022-2025

The GE Plan at the research institute ICECHIM comprises areas of intervention, objectives, key measures, target audience, timeline, responsible persons, and indicators to measure progress.

Area 1. Work-life balance and organisational culture

Objective: Promoting integration of work with family and personal life

Action/Measure	Target	Timeline				Indicator(s)	Responsible
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
Availability of flexible working times arrangements, from part-time to remote working	Researchers, technical and administrative staff	X	X	X	X	Policies and services for work and personal life integration	GD, GE WG

Area 2. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Objective: Promoting gender equality in the institutional culture processes and practice

Action/Measure	Target	Timeline				Indicator(s)	Responsible
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
Routine revision of any text, communication, images, from a gender equality and diversity standing point	Researchers, technical and administrative staff	X	X	X	X	Gender balance in leadership positions	GE WG

Area 3. Equal opportunities in recruitment and career progression

Objective: Promoting processes to ensure equal opportunities recruitment, career and appointments

Action/Measure	Target	Timeline				Indicator(s)	Responsible
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
Disseminate and communicate career good practices	Researchers, technical and administrative staff		X	X	X	Initiatives for raising awareness on equal opportunities in research teams	GE WG

Area 4. Integration of the gender dimension into research content

Objectives: Promoting the integration of a sex and gender perspective in research activity

Action/Measure	Target	Timeline				Indicator(s)	Responsible
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
Workshops on the integration of gender equality and diversity issues in research activity, as support for research staff	Researchers		X	X	X	Training seminars or guidelines on integrating sex/gender in research activity	GE WG

Area 5. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

Objective: Raising awareness about the importance of equality issues and strengthening positive attitudes towards diversity

Action/Measure	Target	Timeline				Indicator(s)	Responsible
		2022	2023	2024	2025		
Training on discrimination phenomena (including discriminatory language), violence (including that based on prejudice or gender), harassment, and sexual harassment	Researchers, technical and administrative staff		X	X	X	Participation in training, per categories Skills acquired in relation to identifying and responding to discrimination and violence phenomena	GE WG

IV. Monitoring and evaluation of the GEP

The implementation of the GEP in ICECHIM research institute, the progress towards the GE strategy aims and objectives are regularly assessed, through periodic meetings. The implementation of the GEP will be permanently monitored by the GE WG.

The GE WG is responsible with collecting data and input. They will perform a first analysis of the progress of the GEP (against the indicators), gather knowledge and feedback.

The GE WG will conclude findings reports (once a year), which are then presented to the research institute management (CD, CA) and discussed. These meetings will provide valuable conclusions on the implementation of the GEP and will also provide comments and recommendations that will enable adjustments and improvements to interventions on the GEP for the following year.

The periodic reports allow the continuous review of the impact of the GEP as well as keeping the wider community informed and engaged in the progress towards gender equality. The review of progress reports includes qualitative information as well as quantitative data, such as updates on human resource data disaggregated by sex / gender, monitoring data to keep track of the implementation of key actions etc.

After their conclusion and adoption by the ICECHIM management, the periodic (annual) GE progress report is published on the research institute website and communicated to the scientific community.

Annex. List of sources used for the literature review

(in alphabetic order)

Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission,

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-equality-commission>

EU FESTA - Gender Issues in Recruitment, Appointment and Promotion Processes – Recommendations for a Gender Sensitive Application of Excellence Criteria,

https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/festa_gender_issues_recruitment_appointment_promotion.pdf

EU Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025, https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

EUA - Universities' Strategies and Approaches towards Diversity, Equity and Inclusion,

<https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/universities-39-strategies-and-approaches-towards-diversity-equity-and-inclusion.pdf>

EUCEN - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions,

https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/web_diversity%20equity%20and%20inclusion%20in%20european%20higher%20education%20institutions.pdf

European charter & code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers,

https://cdn2.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/policy_library/ttf_goal_2_results_v1.0.pdf

European Institute for Gender Equality, <https://eige.europa.eu>

GARCIA – Mapping organizational work-life policies and practices,

https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/garcia_report_mapping_org_work-life_policies_practices.pdf

Guidelines for using gender-sensitive language in communication, research and administration,

https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/reutlingen_university_guidelines_for_using_gender-sensitive_language.pdf

Horizon Europe General Annexes, https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2025/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-13-general-annexes_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf

Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffcb06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1>

LERU - Equality, diversity and inclusion at universities: the power of a systemic approach,

<https://www.leru.org/publications/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-at-universities>

Science Europe - Practical Guide TO Improving Gender Equality in Research Organisations,

https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/se_gender_practical-guide.pdf

Student evaluations of teaching (mostly) do not measure teaching effectiveness,

https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/science_open_research_student_eval_teaching_effectiveness.pdf