

Gender Equality Plan

ZSI – Zentrum für Soziale
Innovation GmbH

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Introduction

For nearly 35 years since its foundation in 1990, ZSI has implemented the promotion of equal opportunities as a fundamental principle in its culture, processes and structures.

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) at hand aims at

- a) Conducting impact assessment of procedures and practices to identify gender bias.
- b) Identifying and implementing innovative strategies to correct any biases.
- c) Setting targets and monitoring progress using indicators¹.

After an initial context analysis describing the external and internal framework, existing data will be analysed according to the topic areas:

- Work-life balance and organisational culture.
- Gender representation in leadership and decision-making.
- Gender equality in recruitment and career progression.
- Integration of gender dimensions into research and teaching content.
- Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

Finally, measures to achieve the aims identified as well as the monitoring process will be described.

Inspiration and guidance for the development of this GEP has been taken from the European Commission Communication on “A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth” (COM(2012) 392 final), publications of EIGE, rules and regulations for participation in Horizon Europe, experiences with Horizon 2020 projects supporting GEP development, tools provided by PLOTINA, RRI-TOOLS and other initiatives.

Both the management board as well as ZSI’s workforce have been engaged in the original development of the document at hand, via a coordination process including collection of input from and discussions with representatives of the works council and individual employees involved and interested in the topic. In addition, the draft was presented to all staff members in a jour fixe, with comments, corrections and amendments considered for this version adopted by ZSI’s board. The current update has been prepared by the organisation’s gender equality representative first nominated in 2021.

A nice acknowledgement of the efforts made is the fact that in summer 2021, ZSI was shortlisted among the top three performers in Vienna in the category “Non-profit organisations” for the State Prize “Family and Job²”, with which the Federal Ministry for Women, Family, Youth and Integration awards Austrian companies and institutions for particularly outstanding achievements in the area of family-conscious personnel policy.

¹ [What is a Gender Equality Plan | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/europa/en/what-is-a-gender-equality-plan)

² [Der Staatspreis | Staatspreis Familie & Beruf \(familienfreundlichsterbetrieb.at\)](https://www.staatspreis.at/der-staatspreis-familie-beruf)

Context analysis

Description of external framework

One of the first milestones in Austria was **“The Equal Treatment Act of Women and Men with regard to Remuneration”**, which was adopted in **1979**. In 1993, the Federal Equal Treatment Act came into force.



As of July 1, 2004, the new Equal Treatment Act (GIBG 2004³), integrating the Directive 2000/43/EC (Anti-Racism Directive) and Directive 2000/78/EC (Equal Treatment Framework Directive) into the already applicable equal treatment laws, replaced these acts. Other than Austria’s 22 public universities (to which the Federal Law for Equal Treatment in Federal Bodies applies), **non-university research organisations are covered by the Equal Treatment Act, which foresees gender equality rather than affirmative action**⁴. This law also clarifies terms such as sexual harassment, general harassment in the workplace and discrimination, as well as accompanying measures and lists important or typical case constellations as special facts, including among others, the application and establishment of an employment relationship, access to professional training and further education, professional advancement, and termination of the employment relationship.

Although improvements have been implemented in recent years to reduce the gender wage gap, Austria still has the third largest wage gap between women and men of 30 countries assessed. According to Eurostat, the **gender pay gap** in Austria was **18.4 percent in 2022**, a 1.5% improvement from the 19.9 percent in 2019⁵, but still well above the EU average (EU-27) of 12.7 percent.⁶



However, when it comes to gender-based inequalities in the labour market, there are significant differences due to various factors and one needs to be careful what to compare. As a private, not-for-profit research institute, ZSI mainly employs staff with tertiary education. Higher education usually results in higher payment of employees, independent of their gender.

In a 2018 study commissioned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) on *“Gender Equality in Science and Research in Austria”*, the authors state for example that **“the gender pay gap in Austria is appreciably lower in science and research than it is in the economy as a whole”** when it comes to remuneration.⁷ Unfortunately comparable data on gender equality is only available for private research institutions in the science and technology sector, but not for non-university research institutes in the humanities, social sciences and cultural sciences.

Looking at the general **participation in the workforce**, from a binary perspective the ratio of women and men is almost **balanced in the non-profit research sector**, helping Austria to assume a mid-range position in EU rankings, much better than the corporate or higher education

³ [RIS Dokument \(bka.gv.at\)](https://www.bka.gv.at)

⁴ [Austria | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

⁵ Unadjusted gender pay gap, defined as the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees (as % of male gross earnings)

⁶ [Gender pay gap statistics - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

⁷ *“Gender Equality in Science and Research in Austria”*, Wroblewski, A., Striedinger, A. u.a.; Institute for Advanced Studies HIS; Study commissioned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, 2018, p102

sector.⁸ However, the sector is very small compared to the corporate and higher education sector and is therefore marginal.

“In Austria, two thirds of all female scientists and researchers work in the higher education sector, compared to only 42 % of their male counterparts. In contrast, the corporate sector plays a far bigger role for men in this field: slightly more than half of men but only a quarter of women working in science and research are employed in the corporate sector”⁹. However, it depends not merely on the number of women working in research in the academic sector, but rather on the positions they occupy and the scientific discipline they work in. In the social sciences, wages compete with those of NGOs or higher education, while the STEM sector competes with industrial or corporate R&D. In the universities, women are mainly represented in the academic mid-level, while men continue to dominate the higher hierarchical levels. Given the different working conditions in these two sectors, corporate and academic, it is important to note that for male researchers, it is far more common to have a well-endowed and secure job than for women.

On a broad scale, **Austria ranks 10th** out of 28 countries with 71.2 out of 100 points, an increase of 3.7 points since 2020 and 1 point above the EU’s average score in the 2023 edition of the **Gender Equality Index**¹⁰, which is based mostly on data from 2021 and 2022. While experiencing progress in most domains in the last four years, interestingly, Austria registered a decrease in score and a drop in the ranking by nine places in the domain of work, which measures the extent to which women and men can benefit from equal access to employment and good working conditions¹¹.

Description of ZSI’s internal framework and Gender Strategy

As a private, non-for-profit research institution, ZSI is governed by the Equal Treatment Act and other regulations, and it applies all legal provisions to that end in its daily business.

In coherence with its name and focus on social innovation, ZSI strives to be a modern, sustainable and future-oriented employer, able to stay attractive for competent, engaged and innovative staff. The institute is independent and does not receive any core funding. It generates its income completely from successfully applying to competitive national and international calls. The fact that most employees have a permanent contract constitutes a challenge for the management board of the organisation.

Generally, as Social Sciences and Humanities are female dominated, it is not surprising for ZSI as a social science research institute to employ more women than men. As of September 2024, ZSI employs 62 staff members, these are 48 women (77.4%) and 14 men (22.6%).

As a result of demographic changes in its staff over the last 15-20 years, ZSI’s management puts a focus on gender equality activities regarding work-life balance. **The aim is to further develop a gender-responsive work culture and work organization both at ZSI and in the**

⁸ Ibd. p12

⁹ Ibd. p14

¹⁰ [Austria | 2023 | Gender Equality Index | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹¹ [Austria | Work | 2023 | Gender Equality Index | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)

implementation of our research projects. This includes the following elements (more details are to be found below in the sub-chapters of the Data Analysis section):

- An essential principle at ZSI is to allow for the best possible way to combine working hours and individual life planning. In coordination between employees, superiors and management, ZSI enables versatile, flexible working time models to adjust project work to the current life phase. The measures cover individually agreed weekly working hours for qualified work; adapted, temporary adjustments to working hours as well as teleworking time models and secondments, enabling individual work-life balance. All these measures are equally open to all employees regardless of their gender.
- Hierarchy levels such as project managers or head of unit are open to full-time and part-time staff members. The promotion to project manager or the awarding of a pay supplement, for example, depends on the project budget managed as a transparent, gender-neutral criterion.
- Advancements in the payment scheme were regulated by a board decision in December 2008, with the duration of the employment being the decisive factor and the communication towards staff done proactively by the management. Important to note is that the first parental and educational leave of a staff member does not interrupt the eligible duration of employment (while consecutive ones do).
- Irrespective of their gender, employees have access to educational leave as well as partial retirement schemes or individual part-time reintegration after longer periods of illness¹². ZSI fosters the option for employees to stay involved in the project work during their educational or parental leave by offering marginal employment.
- ZSI sets aside a budget-per-head for each employee for work-related further education. This is assigned irrespectively of the share of their working-time.
- A particularly important aspect of the work culture at ZSI is the fact that the majority of employees (as far as this can be aligned with the tasks) has access to flexible working arrangements. Each unit has defined one day per week as attendance day. Staff members working less than 20 hours per week must be present in the office that specific day at least. Employees working more than 20 hours per week are supposed to be present at least one more day. In general, everybody has a desk assigned so that indeed one is flexible to opt for either home office, mobile work or work in the office. This flexibility contributes to a high sense of satisfaction with the work culture among employees.
- It is a regular practice to adapt the schedule of meetings, workshops or other events to the needs of the target group of participants, e.g. to care obligations.

In the frame of an internal development process offered by the fit2work programme¹³, launched at ZSI in 2019 and carried out with the support of external experts, certain priorities had been defined for a three-year period. These included:

- Improvement of the **re-entry opportunities** of employees after the end of parental leave and anchoring of high-quality re-entry processes at the ZSI.
- Preventive and **gender-sensitive connection between health and work ability**.
- Further **training** for employees in the field of "**Gender Career Management**".

In summer 2019, two workshops on "Gender Career Management" were implemented, which were open to all interested ZSI employees independent of gender and focused on a) Designing

¹² During the pandemic, this was of course also the case for the special COVID-19 care leave.

¹³ [fit2work \(sozialministeriumservice.at\)](https://www.fit2work.at)

work in a health-promoting manner and improving life balance and b) Communicating in a gender-sensitive and appreciative manner both internally and externally.

In autumn 2021, ZSI's board adopted an "Agreement about the principles to prevent and reduce sexual harassment as well as to promote peaceful conflict resolution at the Centre for Social Innovation", covering preventive measures as well as procedures, trusted persons and their competencies as well as measures and sanctions to be taken. For more details, please see chapter "Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment" below.

Considering the very advanced status quo regarding the common definition of gender equality as ensuring the same rights, resources, responsibilities, opportunities and protections for men and women¹⁴ and the fact that the institute is a three-generation company (with the age difference of active staff members being nearly 36 years), ZSI has adopted a wider definition of equality. **ZSI's aim** – apart from securing the level reached – **is therefore to further promote balanced gender representation** of cis women, cis men, trans, inter* and non-binary persons, **also with regard to the age structure of the workforce**, fostering awareness of gender diversity and the different needs of staff members in different phases of life and implementing measures to that end.



Data analysis

Every two years, Statistics Austria asks research institutions to provide gender-segregated data of their employees, asking in even years for the data of the previous odd year. Since 2022, the survey provides three options to provide the data: male, female and other/diverse. As not everyone is fine with providing such personal information as gender identity, at ZSI people are not asked proactively about their gender, but in 2021 the settings of business software used to manage staff data and statistics were modified upon request of a non-binary staff member to allow for registration as either male, female or non-binary.

Human resource management at ZSI collects gender-segregated data on staff members about their:

- Age, duration of contract
- Salary classification over the course of the years
- Career progression (level, duration until progression)
- Average weekly working hours per year
- Leaves (maternity/paternity, further education; duration of leave)

In the following, the basic parameters of ZSI staff are presented, with additional details to be found further down in the subchapters. In general, data presented covers all employees of the institute, if not otherwise stated. Due to the small numbers, there is no comparison between units and/or work areas such as IT, back office etc.

In September 2024, ZSI employed 62 staff members, of which 48 are women and 14 men. The ratio women/men has been relatively stable for the eight years between 2014 and 2021, with women making up between 62% and 67.7% of the total work force at the institute. However, since 2022, the share of female employees increased continuously to 77.4% in September 2024.

¹⁴ [OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/gender/OSAGI/Gender-Mainstreaming-Concepts-and-definitions)

Looking at the age of the employees, it can be noted that while except for the 20–29-year-old cohort, which is exclusively female, the percentage of women among ZSI’s staff is between 71.4% and 76.4% in each cohort (see Table 1 below). The average age of staff increases in the last three years from 39.9 years to 43.3 years.

Table 1: ZSI staff by age and gender, as of September 2024

age of staff	male	female	%women
60+	1	3	75.0%
50-59	4	13	76.4%
40-49	4	10	71.4%
30-39	5	13	72.2%
20-29	0	9	100.0%
Total number	14	48	

The fact that ZSI becomes even more “female” is evident not only in the age distribution of staff members, but also in the duration of their contracts. Of the 25 employees who have worked at the institute for less than five years, two are male (8%) and 23 are female (92%). On the other hand, among the 26 employees who have been with ZSI for more than ten years, seven are male (27%) and 19 are female (73%). The average age when starting a working contract with the institute is, however, quite stable over the years, at 32 years for both groups. This said, the age when starting to work at ZSI nevertheless ranged from 24 to 58 years in the last five years, showing that the institute is open to provide job opportunities without age discrimination.



Work-life balance and organisational culture

In the last 15 years, ZSI has continuously adapted its internal structures, not because of economic reasons, but in order to provide better work-life balance for its staff and react to the demographic change in its workforce.

As an essential approach to ensure a healthy work-life balance, ZSI offers different forms of **flexible working hours**. Employees are offered a flexitime model with considerable freedom to adjust working hours to personal requirements, for different reasons (child-care, other care obligations, education/training, or even personal preference, health reasons or other) being equally valid. In addition, staff members may request a part-time employment or may vary the extent of their working hours monthly. The demands of scientific project work, including sometimes tight deadlines, simultaneously implementing several projects and writing proposals, as well as business trips, are not entirely favorable to regular working hours. Hence, ZSI’s provisions for work-life balance need to be complemented by some flexibility of the employees in response to the job’s demands. This requires a collaborative and mutually supportive working culture, which is generally the case. Both staff members and management are aware of the need to nurture that culture.

The average weekly working hours as of April 2024 are 28.99 for female staff members and 37.14 for male staff members. Between 2015 and 2019, there was hardly any difference in the average weekly working hours between men and women, while the gap has increased sharply in particular

in the last three years (see Table 2), resulting in men working, on average, more than a full working day per week longer than women at ZSI by 2024. Interestingly, the range of variation of average weekly hours in the last eleven years since 2014 is more than double for men than for women. While men worked on average between 27.14 hours in 2017, the number is 37.14 hours in 2024. Female staff members worked on average 26.01 weekly hours in 2021 and 30.78 weekly hours in 2015. Interpretation of these numbers has to be done carefully, as the number of men working at ZSI is much lower than the number of women and therefore statistical outliers can quickly alter the mean value.

Table 2: average weekly working hours of ZSI staff by gender, as of April 2024

Year	Gender	Average weekly hours	Gender	Average weekly hours	Difference men/women
2014	M	33.89	F	28.32	-5.57
2015	M	30.25	F	30.78	0.53
2016	M	29.06	F	29.33	0.27
2017	M	27.14	F	27.26	0.12
2018	M	28.07	F	28.42	0.35
2019	M	28.37	F	28.12	-0.25
2020	M	28.95	F	26.36	-2.59
2021	M	32.47	F	26.01	-6.46
2022	M	30.14	F	28.42	-1.72
2023	M	32.64	F	28.90	-3.74
2024	M	37.14	F	28.99	-8.15

When it comes to age cohorts, the largest increase in the percentage of staff working fulltime is among the 30–39-year-olds. In 2021, only 6.7% of all (male and female) staff members worked fulltime, while in April 2024 half of the workforce does so (see Table 3). For the women of this age group, the percentage changed from 9.1% three years ago to 53.8% in 2024.

Table 3: percentage of workforce working full-time, by gender, as of April 2024

Age of staff	Total no of staff	working full-time	% full time staff	Total no of men	Men working full time	% full time men	Total no of women	Women working full time	% full time women
60+	4	2	50.0%	1	1	100%	3	1	33.3%
50-59	17	6	35.3%	4	2	50.0%	13	4	30.7%
40-49	14	6	42.8%	4	3	75.0%	10	3	30.0%
30-39	18	9	50.0%	5	2	40.0%	13	7	53.8%
20-29	9	5	55.5%	0	0	n.a	9	5	55.5%

Regarding the extend of working hours, official numbers show that in 2017, around 78% of all part-time employees in Austria were female. In the same year, 47.7% of women were employed part-time.¹⁵ At ZSI, in the same year, 74% of part-time employees were female (even slightly less than on average in Austria), but a full 85% of women were employed part-time. Among male

¹⁵ Gender Equality in Austria, p24

employees, 53% were employed part-time while 47% worked full-time. On the basis of the gendered division of labour and the unequal share of reproductive work, full-time employment is not equally possible for all employees in relation to their caring responsibilities.

Of the currently 62 employees, 26 have been working at ZSI for more than ten years, i.e. 42% of all staff members. This is a clear sign that the work culture at the institute is favourable to the individual work-life balance of employees. Of these, twelve work full-time. 13 jobholders started working at the organisation less than two years ago, seven of which work full-time.

With regard to the organisation of daily work, this flexitime model results in unit meetings as well as jour fixe and board meetings to take place usually between Monday and Thursday between 10 and 12 am to allow part-time staff members to easily join in. This is the result of a number of young mothers returning to work after maternity leave around 2009/2010 and requesting a change in the meeting culture.

Looking at the incidences of **parental leave** between 2007 and 2024, a total of 29 can be counted, 26 of which were maternity leaves, and three were paternity leaves. While still 90% of parental leaves are claimed by mothers, this percentage dropped from 96% since the last issue of the Gender Equality Plan at hand, which looked at the period 2007-2021. The average duration of all parental leaves was 10.35 months. However, first leaves averaged 8.94 months, while consecutive ones lasted on average 11.86 months.

Paternity leaves lasted half a year each. With this, the fathers (and the institute) are avantgarde. According to a recent study by L&R Sozialforschung¹⁶, some 16,7% of fathers in Austria opted for paternity leave in 2022 (down from all-time high 19.3% in 2016). In Vienna, the number was 22.2% in 2022 (down from all-time high 27.2% in 2010). At ZSI, 100% of young fathers in recent years have taken this opportunity – and are among the only 3% of fathers in Austria who take paternity leave of more than two months.

One third of parental leaves, 13 out of 29, were repeated leaves after the births of a second or third child. About 50% of workers on parental leave remained linked to the organisation via minimal employment during their parental leave.

Work-life balance was a priority in the frame of the fit2work initiative implemented at ZSI in 2019. In the first half of May that year, 60 staff members were invited to complete an online survey based on the work performance index ABI plus™. 65% of ZSI's staff took part in the survey. Key results show that 82% of staff members that filled in the survey are (very) satisfied with their work-life balance.¹⁷ Two years later, the survey was repeated with similar results.

That work-life balance is a key issue at ZSI could be observed during the Covid-19 pandemic. When the Austrian government allowed for special child-care leave (“Sonderbetreuungszeit”), the institute offered additional support beyond the legal regulations. Based on the law, employers were obliged to grant this special childcare leave only when schools, kindergarten and day care facilities were completely closed. However, ZSI allowed this also in those cases where parents decided to abstain from making use of the emergency case in these institutions. After the first full lock-down, those employees who could not work at home due to lack of adequate facilities were allowed to come to the office, following a clearly communicated Covid-19 prevention concept

¹⁶ [Wiedereinstiegsmonitoring-2024.pdf \(Irsocialresearch.at\)](#)

¹⁷ Ergebnisbericht ABI Plus™, June 26, 2019

regularly adapted to changing legal circumstances. This way, staff members could decide for themselves how they organised their work-life balance during the pandemic.

Another option available for individual work-life balance are so-called **educational leaves**. At ZSI, since 2010 a total of 14 staff members made use of this agreement between employer and employee, where for the duration of a further training measure the employee is exempted from work. Of these, 71% were women and 29% were men.



Gender representation in leadership and decision-making

As a small company with around 60 employees, ZSI has a rather flat hierarchy. Structured into three units (Research Policy & Development, Technology & Knowledge, Work & Equal Opportunities), the respective heads of unit together with the scientific and managing director (who acts as head for office and IT staff as well) form the board, the main decision-making body of the institute.

In the general assembly in June 2024, a new board was elected for the period 2024-2027, composed of three male and two female members, with the two directors being male and working at ZSI for (nearly) 20 or more years. With regard to age, the female board members are on average nearly 15 years younger than the male ones. All three heads of unit started working at ZSI as junior researchers, before advancing to project managers and ultimately to their current position.

The two units headed by women are exclusively female. The third and largest one employs 17 female (61%) and eleven male staff (39%). The general staff not allocated to one of the three units is composed in a similar way, with five women (63%) and three men (37%).

In the works council, the workforce is currently represented by three women and one man (ratio female – male 3:1, an exact mirror of the workforce ratio).

In the board of directors, decisions and measures affecting all staff members are always considered under work-life balance and gender aspects, taking into account the different living realities of employees not only with regard to gender, but also with regard to age, health, and caring responsibilities. Head of units can gather their team's opinions on open issues during unit meetings .

Any appraisal interviews are done in a gender-sensitive, gender equality orientated and holistic setting, respecting the individual work-life balance of the employee regarding his or her stage of life, gender and age.

The two appointed health representatives at ZSI are both female. They are contact points for staff members in questions related to health issues. In all areas, especially in questions relating to health maintenance, gender-relevant differences are systematically taken into account in the analysis and development of measures.



Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

At ZSI, there is a **fixed salary scheme** applicable for all staff members, providing for eleven categories such as head of unit, project leader, project member, trainee, office

and support personnel etc. The works council confirms that there is no gender pay-gap at ZSI. The salary scheme is transparent for all staff members. Currently, 48% of women and 50% of men are classified as project managers, so there is no obvious difference. However, looking at the overall functions of staff members, 52% of women are classified project manager and higher, while 86% of men are.

A **parental leave** does not bear any negative consequences for the parent as to career progression. The first such leave does not even interrupt the duration of work contract considered for the automatic advancement regarding the salary scheme, while consecutive ones do. This means that parents who have taken a (first) leave receive seniority-based salary increases within the same timeframe as their peers without children.

As mentioned above, in a period of two consecutive years, each staff member is entitled to an individual **further education allotment** of 600 Euro and maximum four working days, the amount being independent from the extent of working hours of the person in question. While before the Corona pandemic, around €10,000 have been allocated each year, with about 75% paid for further education requested by women. During the pandemic 2020-2021, this amount dropped considerably to some €2,500 per year. For the current two-year-period, the total amount again is much lower than before the pandemic (between €2,300 and €3,000 each year). Reasons for this include additional options for ZSI staff to conduct further education (e.g. the ACR qualification network) or increased use of (shorter and cheaper) online courses. In 2023 and 2024 to date, however, the share paid for further education requested by women was 100%.



Integrating the gender dimension into research and teaching content

ZSI regularly submits proposals to a number of funding programmes with a clear gender dimension or focus on gender equality. Gender issues are part of ZSI's daily work as a social scientific research organisation. In all our projects, we try to consider inequalities from an intersectoral perspective, which of course also includes gender, even when it is not explicitly requested by funding bodies or clients.

Project managers at ZSI try to raise awareness on the topic even in projects without an explicit gender dimension, e.g. by suggesting how to address target groups by email (e.g. "Dear [name] [surname]" instead of "Dear Ms/Mr [name]", thus trying to avoid attributions) or recommend checking the preferred pronouns of participants at a project event. In this way, ZSI employees help raise awareness about gender issues and the importance of language sensitivity, as language shapes our perception of the world.

Currently, ZSI leads or contributes to tasks with gender aspects in all projects according to the funding programme rules, with a leading role in currently six EU-funded international projects (BOOST-IN, CONSERWA, XGAIN, CIRCYSYST, WeLaR and PSYR-IR), with another one (VOLABIOS) starting at the beginning of 2025. In several of these projects, gender aspects are addressed in an intersectional way, considering several diversity aspects at the same time.

By continuing to strive toward better integration of gender dimensions in the content of research and innovation project, ZSI will directly contribute to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. One focus of ZSI is

RRI – responsible research and innovation, which includes gender as one of six keys. Therefore, as in the past, the institute will continue to expand gender equality issues in research and innovation to include intersections with other potential grounds for discrimination, such as ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation.



Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

According to statistical data, 25% of women working in Austria have experienced sexual harassment at work, with 3% indicating they experienced such behaviour at work during the last 12 months and 10% mentioned such experience in the last five years¹⁸.

As it is part of ZSI's organisational culture to foster an open and tolerant (research) community respecting the integrity and core values of each person in any social interaction, in the 35 years of its existence, there was not a single case of gender-based violence or sexual harassment that was made known to any member of the board of directors. The workers' council, as a trusted and controlling body, confirmed that no staff member reported any such incident to any of its members since the foundation in August 2010.

Notwithstanding the fact that until then no specific case required attention by the management or required relevant procedures, ZSI's board adopted in August 2021 an "Agreement about the principles to prevent and reduce sexual harassment as well as to promote peaceful conflict resolution at the Centre for Social Innovation", covering preventive measures as well as procedures, the appointment of trusted persons, the description of their competencies as well as a list of measures and sanctions to be taken. This document deals not only with potential incidents within the organisation, but also those suffered by ZSI staff from third parties or those inflicted by ZSI staff on third parties. In addition, the measures described therein are such as to handle also past incidents that might be reported at some time in the future.

Information about ZSI's measures against gender-based violence have been included in the Welcome Package for newly hired staff members, which are proactively briefed in the first days of their contract with the institute.



Monitoring processes and procedures

For an effective and continuous assessment and implementation of the aims and measures with regard to gender equality outlined herein, the ZSI management board first appointed a gender equality representative in 2021 who ensures the involvement of all relevant stakeholders into the evaluation process. Their term of office lasts three years. In 2024, the person holding this position was re-appointed by the management board.

The functions of the gender equality representative include the following tasks:

- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the gender segregated data and gender equality indicators provided by management.

¹⁸ [Austria | Violence | 2023 | Gender Equality Index | European Institute for Gender Equality \(europa.eu\)](#)

- Drafting regular updates of ZSI's gender equality plan after assessment and evaluation of measures after discussion with all stakeholders (board of directors, works council, all staff members).
- Contact point for project managers regarding the implementation of gender-related issues in research proposals and projects.
- Suggestion and organisation of useful awareness raising trainings on gender equality and unconscious gender biases, gender-responsive language and other topics for all ZSI staff including the management board.
- External representation of ZSI in gender related aspects.

A dedicated mailbox gender@zsi.at has been set up to allow all employees to easily contact the gender equality representative to share ideas, concerns and suggestions with regard to the topic.

The review of the objectives and measures of ZSI's gender equality plan as well as the evaluation of their effectiveness are carried on a regular basis. After an update, the data and its quantitative and qualitative analysis by the appointed gender equality representative will be presented and discussed

- in the board of directors in one of their regular meetings and
- in a jour fixe to all employees.

This participatory process ensures that all stakeholders can contribute in a structured way to the objectives formulated and the instruments and measures stemming from these.

Indicators will be analysed according to their efficacy and the level of achievement of each objective will be evaluated. The results of the overall evaluation will be communicated transparently within the organisation and the updated version of the GEP at hand be published on the website.

The following indicators are used for monitoring purposes:

Recruitment

- Ratio of applications by gender to positions advertised
- Ratio of female, male and non-binary employees recruited

Career development

- Proportion of women, men and non-binary persons in leading positions (head of unit, management)
- Proportion of female, male and non-binary employees on all other hierarchy levels
- Duration of career advancement (promotion to different function) by gender
- Duration of contract by age and gender

Work-life balance

- Extent of employment (number of hours contracted per week) by the employees' gender
- Use of parental leave, educational leave and partial retirement options by gender

Further Education

- Proportion of female, male and non-binary employees participating in further training paid by ZSI

- Number of internal formats (e.g. lunchtalk, jour fixe ...) dedicated to gender-related issues

Aims for the next two years

With regard to “work-life balance and organisational culture”, for the next two years, ZSI aims at



- Keeping up the flexible tools in place to support work-life balance and organisational culture, improving the current framework based on the experiences of actively promoting work-life balance by suggesting additional measures for tailor-made individual work-life balance.
- Intensifying the efforts to take into account other issues such as age, health etc. Use existing processes and bodies (e.g. unit meetings, workers council meetings etc.) to discuss with employees what else could be done to improve further the organisational culture at ZSI.



With regard to “gender representation in leadership and decision-making”, for the next two years, ZSI aims at

- Training on gender equality for the decision-making level.
- Having an equal share of male/female representatives at the highest hierarchy level of the organisation, removing the “glass ceiling” for women.

With regard to “gender equality in recruitment and career progression”, for the next two years, ZSI aims at



- Increasing the number of underrepresented gender in the units by opting for the underrepresented gender in case of equal qualification.
- Implementing the concept of gender-neutral recruitment, both regarding job advertisement (in line with legal regulations) and with ZSI representatives of different genders present at the job interviews.
- Establishing a procedure to collect relevant data about ratio of male/female/diverse applications received and male/female/diverse interviewees invited.
- Organising one awareness raising training per year on gender equality and unconscious gender biases or gender-responsive language for staff in leading positions, starting with the board of directors and finding ways to disseminate the information in the workforce.
- Allocating the fair share of further education budget to all genders, without dissuading a gender from requesting such further education, but by pro-actively approaching the once less represented.
- Fostering an LGBTQIA+ supportive atmosphere.

With regard to “integrating the gender dimension into research and teaching content”, for the next two years, ZSI aims at



- Keeping our focus on gender-aware settings, designs and analysis throughout our projects, e.g. actively striving to organise events in such a way that they are open to all genders.
- Actively seeking for projects and collaborations that address gender directly and thus build and extend the institute's gender expertise and capacities.
- Fostering the gender competence of the employees through internal training formats (e.g. lunch talks).
- Collecting good practice examples of gender-related tasks conducted in our projects and sharing this knowledge in an organized way among project managers at ZSI.
- Collecting gender-related literature and research and share this with staff members.

With regard to “measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment”, for the next two years, ZSI aims at



- Adding the exchange on the topic to the quarterly meetings between management and workers' council.

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