

ICOS ERIC Gender Equality Plan



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1. Introduction

Gender equality (GE) improves the quality and relevance of research and innovation (R&I) by attracting and retaining more talent, by enhancing diversity, and by ensuring that everyone can maximize their potential which in turn leads to better results. Hence, gender equality is considered a fundamental value of the European Union (EU) (European Commission 2021a.).

Ensuring equal treatment of all genders and acknowledging gender-related issues makes organisations not only more attractive employers but also sends a signal of a unified front among European research infrastructures when it comes to equality and acknowledgement. However, addressing gender equality requires a coordinated effort from the whole European R&I system (European Commission 2021a.) This includes gender equality. ICOS ERIC has a set of measures in place to foster an organisational culture where equality and inclusivity are key values (see ICOS ERIC [Employment Policy](#)). This document introduces these measures, following the guidelines set out by the European Commission in the “Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans” that was released in 2021. In this document, these guidelines are tied to the wider organisational principle of staff well-being.

2. Definition and scope

According to the European Commission Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans (2021 a), “a GEP is a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through institutional and cultural change”. It lists four mandatory elements that an organisation should address in its GEP:

- Publicity of the GEP document
- Resources that are dedicated to exercising GE
- Data collection methods that are used to obtain information about GE in the organisation
- Description of the GE-related training the organisation offers to staff

It also recommends five elements to include in the GEP:

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

The following chapters describe how these elements are being addressed by ICOS ERIC.

It is important to explain the scope of ICOS ERIC’s GEP. Firstly, it needs to be clarified that this document acknowledges that gender does not, solely, mean the biological sex a person is born with, but also the dimension of gender identity, e.g. the gender a person identifies with, separately from the biological gender (or sex?). Gender should also be viewed as something that a person continually renegotiates throughout one’s life course (see for example Emslie & Hunt 2009) and as “an ongoing activity embedded in everyday interaction” (see for example West and Zimmermann 1987, p. 130). Hence, practising a gender-neutral approach that focuses on inclusivity and staff equality in general, but takes into account the embedded gendered structures that stem from societal structures and history is important. This means for example taking into account organisational diversity related to organisational

and managerial culture, memberships, ways of learning, and internationality, as well as the ability to recognise staff's different life situations.

Secondly, it is important to recognise that "gender balance" and "gender equality" are to be looked at separately. It needs to be understood that "gender balance", where an organisation tries to promote an equivalent number of representatives from all genders, only caters for one part of working towards equality that is not always materialised solely through focusing on the equal number of different genders in different areas of the organisation. This is especially true in small organisations such as ICOS ERIC (19 employees in 2021).

Thirdly, this document considers only ICOS ERIC. It is a small organisation that employs a handful of culturally diverse staff. ICOS ERIC is committed to support its personnel in the day-to-day working atmosphere by having relevant measures related to well-being at work in place. However, ICOS ERIC coordinates the ICOS RI (ICOS Research Infrastructure). The role of ICOS ERIC is to ensure coordinated and harmonized GHG measurements in Europe. ICOS RI consists of staff who are, outside the ERIC, employed by scientific institutions in several different fields in several countries. The RI personnel come from several different organisational cultures and histories. In addition to maintaining and developing the ICOS ERIC organisational culture related to GE, ICOS ERIC needs to, simultaneously, be aware of the gender-related structures in the wider RI, despite each of its member institutions being responsible for their own gender equality measures. This means that ICOS ERIC, in communicating across the whole RI, and in coordinating community engagement and operational and strategic management that concerns the whole RI, needs to ensure that it communicates the importance of the principles of GE in a wider context of the whole RI. Hence, while this document describes measures taken by ICOS ERIC, occasional references to ICOS RI are made.

3. Dimensions

Mandatory parts

3.1 Publicity of the document

This is a public document, available on the [ICOS ERIC website](#).

3.2 Dedicated resources

ICOS ERIC facilitates the measures related to GE through internal processes and via the occupational health services it procures from an occupational health service provider. ICOS ERIC provides staff with documentation and materials that introduce internal guidelines related to equality and inclusivity, and organises training and feedback mechanisms (annual survey) through occupational health. GE-related indicators are reported as part of ICOS ERIC's annual reporting and taken into account in annual Work Plans.

The EC guidelines related to GE are also being actively followed through participation in the ERIC Forum and projects (such as RITRAIN Plus and ERIC Forum Implementation Project).

Dedicated personnel in ICOS ERIC inform staff about available webinars and workshops related to GE. In addition, ICOS ERIC has a staff ambassador who can be approached with issues related to GE, in the

framework of an “Early Intervention Model”. The staff ambassador is a member of staff who is selected, by voting, every year. The “Early Intervention Model” is designed in cooperation with the Occupational Health Provider and describes a process that is followed to resolve conflict situations.

Processes related to staff equality and inclusivity are described in the RI’s Employment Policy and Management Plan. Staff is also able to access the following internal materials:

Documentation available to all staff:

- Employment policy
- Staff rules, including recruitment policy
- Staff code of conduct
- Salary and career progression plan
- Early Intervention Model (including measures about harassment and bullying at workplace)
- Occupational Health (guidelines for use)
- Staff ambassador’s contact details and role description
- Development discussions materials and guidelines
- Staff well-being survey results and materials
- Training materials related to GE, inclusivity and diversity at workplace
- Any other relevant materials from events participated by the ERIC staff

3.3 Data collection and monitoring

The GE data originates from regular staff well-being surveys, conducted by an occupational health provider in collaboration with the ICOS ERIC Head Office. The GE-related questions have been formulated to ensure compatibility with GDPR guidelines in the context of a small organisation such as ICOS ERIC. The questions function as GE-specific indicators that are reported to the Director General and Heads of the Units, in the ICOS ERIC annual activity report which is presented to the General Assembly (GA). (Indicators are explained at the end of each chapter). In addition to the GA, Ethical Advisory Board and Scientific Advisory Board are made aware of the GE (it is also a public document).

3.4 Training

GE-related training is offered through Occupational Health and has specific training sessions related to for example recognising workplace sexual harassment and wellbeing at work. Other topics will be introduced as part of the ongoing increasing of GE awareness among staff.

Furthermore, staff is informed of, and encouraged to attend webinars and workshops related to GE and work-life balance in general. ICOS ERIC staff regularly present ideas and findings from workshops to other members of staff, and in doing so, has implemented a discursive culture where any issues can be brought up informally.

Recommended parts

3.5 Work-life balance

Objectives

- Ensure that staff is able to maintain a good work-life balance.

ICOS ERIC has specific measures in place to support personnel in different life situations. The objective is to support well-being at work and outside work, and take into account individual needs of different people, as ‘work-life balance’ can be perceived differently among staff. According to Emslie & Hunt (2009) gender remains embedded in the ways that home and work lives are negotiated, calling for the gender dimension to be taken into account. In this plan, the ‘work-life balance’ is defined as ‘satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict’ (defined for example by Clark 2000). Despite its seemingly simple definition, it needs to be looked at from several perspectives.

Research (see for example Emslie & Hunt 2009; Gregory & Milner 2009) shows that there are differences in the ways different genders perceive their roles related to working and home life. Emslie & Hunt (2009) found that while (people identifying as) women often express an ongoing ‘juggling multiple roles’ both at work and at home, (people identifying as) men often describe a more straightforward split between working life and family / home life. For all genders, it is however recognised that ‘domestic identities and responsibilities sometimes spill over into the workplace and that organizational identities and responsibilities often cross into home life’ (p. 152). While it is not purposeful to over-generalise the different genders’ experiences of this - as this type of approach takes away from the understanding of ‘gender’ being not strictly binary - it is, however, important to recognise different ways people may perceive their ‘work-life balance’. This has a direct impact on the well-being, and the perception of inclusivity and equality at the workplace. Hence, the measures taken to ensure that all staff is able to maintain a work-life balance need to be agile.

While some of the measures described below (for example parental leave allocation) stem directly from legislation (ICOS ERIC’s statutory seat is in Finland and Finnish legislation is observed), ICOS ERIC pays attention to additional ways it can support staff’s well-being at work.

Measures in place

Flexible working time arrangements: ICOS ERIC supports flexible working hours, meaning that it has specific core hours defined but outside those hours, when responsibilities permit, staff is able to plan their working day around their other responsibilities. Staff are also able to use accumulated flexi hours.

Remote work: ICOS ERIC supports remote working, enabling better work-life balance in terms of being able to better navigate between one’s personal and professional responsibilities when one’s work is not always physically attached to a specific place. Research has shown that working from home increases satisfaction and productivity, and allows to better reconcile work-family duties (Fana *et al.* 2020). ICOS ERIC also recognises that remote work comes with the need to ensure that inclusivity, well-being and communication are maintained, and has, hence, implemented effective means of internal communication and dedicated times when staff meet face to face.

Career breaks: ICOS ERIC’s staff rules give detailed information about how career breaks (such as parental leave, study leave, unpaid leave) are administered. This information is based on the national legislation (Finnish and Swedish) as necessary, and includes also internally agreed on processes. Staff is also supported in re-integration into the community after such breaks by a well-developed system of

development discussions that regularly address the well-being and motivation of each staff member individually and confidentially.

Continuing awareness of staff well-being at work: ICOS ERIC conducts an annual staff well-being survey via its occupational health provider. Parallel to this, ICOS ERIC also collects feedback from staff related to equality and inclusivity.

Development discussions: ICOS ERIC follows a process of development discussions. All staff participates in these discussions at least twice a year, with the possibility to have additional discussions two times a year. Staff well-being is addressed as part of regular development discussions.

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

As part of an annual staff survey, the following questions are used as indicators about staff's work-life balance, equality and inclusivity:

- I am satisfied with my work-life balance (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)
- ICOS ERIC offers enough flexibility to maintain work-life balance (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)
- I am aware of the possibilities offered by ICOS ERIC about maintaining my work-life balance (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)
- I am able to communicate my needs about improving my work-life balance to my supervisor (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)

3.6 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Objective

- Ensure inclusiveness related to membership in committees, working groups, and discussions related to decision-making.

ICOS ERIC is a small organisation and membership of internal working groups is defined through a person's position. For example, the "Heads of Units' -group consists of line managers. ICOS ERIC has internal working groups, the membership of which is based on staff's interest and willingness to participate (participation is always encouraged). In other occasions, membership is defined based on the person's position and area of expertise.

In the coordination activities that ICOS ERIC performs related to the whole RI, similar principles apply. In the committees that ICOS ERIC coordinates, membership is also defined by a person's role in the RI (for example, the Research Infrastructure Committee members are the directors of ICOS' central facilities and the chairs of the Monitoring Station Assemblies). When the committee positions are filled, ICOS ERIC coordinates this process and pays attention to encouraging applications across the community and openly communicates the positions within the RI. However, it has to be noted that the final decision on the Central Facility personnel is at their Host Institutions and not in the hand of ICOS ERIC.

As ICOS RI's field, environmental science, is one of the STEM fields, there has traditionally been an under-representation of people who identify as females (see for example European Commission 2021). ICOS

ERIC staff, on the other hand, performs coordinating and administering roles that have often been of interest to candidates identifying as females.

Given the small size of the ERIC organisation with highly specialised work roles, and the number and diversity of different organisations making appointment decisions in the RI, it is not surprising that when looked at the gender balance of both ICOS ERIC and ICOS RI, the balance is not equal in any of the RI bodies. Thus, ensuring a gender balance in leadership and decision-making is not always possible. ICOS ERIC, however, thrives towards facilitating an inclusive, discursive organisational culture where everyone feels they can express an interest in participating in decision-making in the coordinating bodies.

Measures in place

- **Maintaining an inclusive, open, and communicative process** when filling in positions in decision-making bodies inside ICOS ERIC. This is achieved by detailed process- and task descriptions as part of the RI's Management Plan and effective communication.
- Provide all decision-makers and leaders with gender equality training and access to relevant material related to GE matters in ICOS RI activities that are coordinated by the ERIC

Measures to increase inclusivity and equality in the future:

- To increase diversity in managerial positions in the decision-making bodies that ICOS ERIC coordinates, ICOS ERIC facilitates leadership training that targets under-represented groups, such as candidates who identify as females (currently under-represented in the RI-wide context)

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

As part of an annual staff survey, the following are used as indicators about gender balance in leadership and decision-making:

- Female, male and gender-diverse personnel in decision-making bodies inside ICOS ERIC and in the bodies that are coordinated by ICOS ERIC.
- ICOS ERIC has an inclusive culture when it comes to memberships in committees, working groups, and other bodies (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)
- I feel comfortable expressing my opinions in the day to day working culture (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)
- I feel comfortable in expressing my interest in participating in working groups or committees (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)

3.7 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Objectives

- Ensure inclusivity in recruitment processes and career progression.

ICOS ERIC is an equal opportunities employer. This means that no preference or discrimination based on biological or identified gender, physical abilities or ethnic or cultural background are tolerated in relation to recruitment or career progression. Staff is always evaluated based on required abilities

related to one's position. ICOS ERIC's recruitment policy (included in the staff rules) addresses these principles.

Measures in place

- **Use of gender-neutral, inclusive language** in recruitment processes and communication related to staff matters.
- **Allowing respondents to opt out of distributing specific information.** During the recruitment process and in any staff surveys, an option for "do not wish to disclose" and "other" are always provided especially when collecting personal (gender-, health- or ethnic- and cultural related) data, or data that can be perceived to be personal. ICOS ERIC follows a principle

Measures to increase inclusivity and equality in the future:

- Exploring possibilities to shift towards **anonymous recruitment processes**. Applications could be processed anonymously until interview stage.

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

As part of an annual staff survey, the following are used as indicators about gender equality in recruitment and career progression:

- During the recruitment processes I have participated (either as joining ICOS or as representative of the employer), I felt that ICOS ERIC is an equal opportunity employer (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)
- I feel that ICOS ERIC exercises equality and neutrality in its recruitment processes (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)
- ICOS ERIC provides equal opportunities for career advancement regardless of staff's gender, physical ability or ethnic / cultural background (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)

3.8 Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

Objective

- Integrate equality and inclusivity in culture principles, policies and across project and other funding proposals and teaching / training coordinated by ICOS ERIC.

ICOS ERIC's main role is to coordinate and facilitate the operationality and sustainability of ICOS RI. This means that ICOS ERIC does not itself participate in scientific research or science-related teaching. However, ICOS ERIC is responsible for the overall strategical development of the RI, coordinating project proposals and applying for research funding, maintaining dialogues with different scientific and political bodies, and implementing ways to increase community engagement and communication. In this way, ICOS ERIC needs to integrate GE related issues as part of the overall managerial processes in contexts that are tied to research and teaching.

Measures in place

- **Maintaining an inclusive, open, and communicative process** when coordinating project- and other external funding proposals, or coordinating existing projects and organising training. This is achieved by following the ICOS Code of Conduct. Detailed process- and task descriptions as part of the RI's Management Plan describe the way project proposal coordination is organised and communicated by the ERIC.
- **Using neutral, inclusive language** in all communication related to research coordination
- **Ensuring an inclusive, equal culture** is maintained during meetings, workshops and events that ICOS ERIC coordinates and participates, as well as unofficial social situations during working days.

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

As part of an annual staff survey, the following are used as indicators about equality and inclusivity in research and teaching content:

- Female, male and gender-diverse personnel from ICOS ERIC in proposal writing teams and project consortia
- ICOS ERIC has an inclusive culture when it comes to proposal writing and project participation (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)
- I feel comfortable in expressing my interest in participating in proposal writing, contributing to projects, or participating / organising events (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)
- When several staff members possess similar skill sets, do you feel that ICOS ERIC has an inclusive culture when it comes to participation in science- and research-related activities regardless of gender or cultural background? (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)

3.9 Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

Objective

- Ensure that the organisational culture of zero tolerance of violence and harassment

ICOS ERIC has a structure in place where it has defined preventive measures against inappropriate behaviour, such as sexual harassment. An early intervention model and a staff code of conduct are in place and include detailed steps related to dealing with any such issues. ICOS ERIC also has a staff ambassador who can be approached with any concerns related to harassment or bullying.

Measures in place

- **Foster a comprehensive policy against violence and sexual harassment** (defined, documented procedure). This is achieved by documenting and conveying the measures against sexual harassment, bullying and other types of violence in the ICOS ERIC Code of Conduct and in the Early Intervention Model when appropriate
- **Providing staff training** on unconscious bias, equality and inclusivity, as well as on mitigating violence or harassment via external service provider (such as Occupational Health)

- Based on the results of the annual staff well-being survey, **necessary measures** will be implemented according to the early intervention model, ICOS Code of Conduct and if necessary, with the support Ethical Advisory Board.
- **Affirming behaviours** (for example Huffman et al. 2021): supporting staff's well-being by fostering an accepting, inclusive and equal working environment, as specified in the Code of Conduct, e.g. by respecting staff's preferred ways of being addressed (use of gender-affirming pronouns, refraining from using terminology that can be perceived as derogatory)

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

As part of an annual staff survey, the following are used as indicators about measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment:

- ICOS ERIC has a zero tolerance towards any kind of (gender-based or other) harassment and violence. Do you feel that this is true in the everyday working culture? (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)
- Do you feel physically, emotionally and professionally safe in the day to day working atmosphere in ICOS ERIC? (Yes, definitely; Yes, somewhat; I don't know; Not really; Not at all)
- What measures do you wish to implement to improve your overall well-being at work in ICOS ERIC?
- I have participated in training related to unconscious bias, equality and inclusivity (Yes; No; I have not been offered training)
- I found training related to unconscious bias, equality and inclusivity useful (Yes; No; I have not been offered training)

4. Monitoring and reporting

ICOS ERIC has integrated the above defined indicators as part of its annual reporting. The annual reports are publicly available [on the ICOS ERIC website](#)

5. Responsibilities

ICOS ERIC Head Office is responsible for the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan. Specific measures are the responsibility of the Director General, supervisors, and each staff member.

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