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Gender Equality Plan Orpheus Institute

Ghent, 2022

Introduction

Within the European Commission's Strategy for Gender Equality 2020 - 2025, the European Commission is committed to promoting gender equality in research and innovation. This is complementary to the established regulatory framework within the EU on gender equality, which applies to all sectors. However, within the research context, there are still several structural barriers to gender equality in research and innovation. As a consequence, from 2022, any legal entity (government body, research or higher education institution) must have a gender equality plan in place to be eligible for funding from Horizon Europe, the framework programme for research and innovation.

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) must, according to the Horizon Europe work programme, meet four minimum mandatory process-related requirements:

- Public document. A GEP is a formal document published on the organisation's website, signed by the top management and actively communicated within your organisation.
- Dedicated resources. A GEP must include a commitment to provide sufficient resources and expertise in gender equality for implementation.
- Data collection and monitoring. A GEP should be informed by collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data on personnel (and students, for the relevant organisations). Organisations should report progress annually based on specific indicators.
- Training. A GEP must include awareness-raising and training activities on gender equality for the whole organisation and training on unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers.

In addition, there are recommended thematic areas that organisations may wish to consider in their GEP:

- Balance between work and private life
- Gender balance in leadership and decision making
- Gender balance in recruitment and career development
- Gender dimension in research
- Gender related harassment
- Monitoring and data gathering

Gender Equality @ Orpheus Institute

Since its inception, the Orpheus Institute is committed to ensuring that everyone has access to a high quality learning experience and an open research space, and have the opportunity to pursue their academic goals in a safe, supportive learning and research environment.

The Orpheus Institute commits itself to act in accordance with the principles of respect for the human being, social justice, equal opportunities, protection of the diversity, accuracy and cultural honesty and transparency thereby widening the training of highly qualified professionals to conscious and active European citizenship. The Equal Opportunities Policy of the Orpheus Institute aims to ensure that no student, staff member or visitor is subjected to unfair discrimination. Everybody, regardless of gender, gender identity, nationality, ethnical background, religious or political convictions, age and position should be able to flourish and develop. The Orpheus Institute will endeavour to create an inclusive environment and culture in which students and staff give due respect to other people and their work or ideas and can truly be themselves.

Within the framework of equality, Orpheus Institute has, during the past years, prioritized on the topic of gender equality as the institute realized that the underrepresentation of female (research) staff and board members was striking and no longer acceptable. In recent years, the Orpheus Institute has been catching up and has taken actions to implement a gender-neutral research and education culture and to align the gender balance:

- promoting the equal recruitment of women and men to various positions and strive to ensure equal opportunities for career advancement at all levels.
- increasing the number of women in leadership positions.
- striving for the appointment of as many men as women in the composition of the board of governors, advisory and management boards and evaluation committees.
- seeking for an even representation of women and men in the teaching staff, guest and keynote speakers, and invited participants at the institute's events.

Th Orpheus Institute is fully aware that its efforts are not sufficient yet and that gender equality balance awareness should be improved in the coming years. Challenges include, among others:

- integrating gender equality perspectives into all policy domains and at all policy levels.
- raising awareness about gender equality and inclusiveness in the workplace.
- promoting and highlighting women in leadership positions.
- incorporating gender equality in all kinds of communication.

The Gender Equality Plan below is conceived as an overview of various initiatives that are currently standard practice at the institute and are intended to be implemented. In addition to this GEP, Orpheus Institute is committed to the principles laid in The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, 2017) and the European Charter for Researchers.

Balance between work and private life

Current initiatives

- Staff members are given a number of days a year to work from home.
- Orpheus Institute offers flexible working hours.
- Meetings and activities outside the normal working hours are avoided as much as possible.
- Orpheus Institute does not expect PIs, researchers, students and staff to read or respond to emails beyond the working hours. Important applications to submit (e.g. grant applications, paper deadlines) can be exceptions.
- Women and men are given the opportunity to take paternity leave, so that they can divide care tasks at home more equally. This allows both women and men to invest equally in their careers. Attention is also paid to postnatal support for mothers by providing facilities for breastfeeding.

Planned Actions

- Orpheus Institute will continue working on flexible working arrangements (sliding work hours, teleworking, agreements on childcare arrangements, etc.), according to the staff's private situation. This will be embedded and documented in the working regulations.
- A key focus is to further develop the policy on hybrid working and on actions that make hybrid working more efficient. This will be further expanded with the implementation of hybrid frameworks for conferences, examinations, meetings etc. Hybrid environments allow staff, researchers, guest speakers, etc. to participate fully in the debate when physical presence is not possible due to private circumstances.

Gender balance in leadership and decision making

Current initiatives

In recent years there has been a greater awareness of gender balance in various councils, leadership and decision making positions at the Orpheus Institute:

- In 2016, the general assembly was renewed with the aim to attract at least 1/3 female members. From 11 board members, there are currently 4 female members. Orpheus Institute achieved its initial target.
- The Research Advisory Council (RAC) is one of Orpheus' most important advisory resources. It consists of authorities and executives in the field of research management and leadership. In recent years, the RAC underwent several changes in membership composition. Since 2020-2021, three of the five members are women.
- Similar vigilance exists in the composition of evaluation committees during external evaluations and visitations. Here also, Orpheus Institute has long achieved a gender balance.
- Finally, there is continuous alertness about a gender-balanced composition of examination and assessment committees (entrance exams and mid-term evaluations) in the context of the doctoral programme docARTES.

Planned actions

Orpheus Institute experiences the same tendency as universities and research centres do: the higher up the academic and management career ladder, the fewer women appear in top positions and the more striking the gender imbalance. Research at Orpheus is conducted by 6 research teams, who are led by a PI (senior researcher). Currently, only one PI is female. Orpheus Institute also experiences a numerical gender inequality at the management level. The institute is led by a male director and a male research director. The steering committee, composed of the PIs of the research clusters, is predominantly male. This also applies to the coordinators of the docARTES doctoral programme. Orpheus institute wants to address this imbalance by implementing the following actions:

- The ambition to have a more balanced gender composition in the board of governors (after renewal in 2016) was not fully met. From 8 board members, only 2 are currently female. Orpheus Institute will engage to attract at least 1/3 female members by 2025.
- Orpheus Institute is committed to attracting more female (fellow and postdoctoral) researchers/Pis and more women on a management level, and would like to increase the number of women in these positions to 30 % by 2025.
- Orpheus Institute will make efforts to attract more women for leadership positions through considerate recruitment processes (see Gender balance in recruitment and career development).
- During recruitment and contract negotiation, Orpheus Institute will take into account the workload (working hours, meetings, appointments, congresses, etc.) in relation to the family situation of female researchers/leaders/staff members. This balance will be closely monitored and discussed with staff at regular intervals.
- Orpheus Institute will invest in raising awareness to all staff about the role and significance of women in leadership roles.
- There is also a role for the director to implement gender balance in the institute's policy structure.

Gender balance in recruitment and career development

Current initiatives

The Orpheus Institute is committed to a transparent human resource policy:

- There are recruitment procedures in place that promote, facilitate and achieve equality and diversity:
 - 📄 Vacancy texts are gender-neutral, inviting, and drafted to appeal to everyone, regardless of gender identity. They have a clear description of the job purpose, key responsibilities, desired qualifications, skills and knowledge, relevant experience and other aspects that are needed to be able to fulfil the position successfully.
 - 📄 Vacancies are widely spread through open and public channels.
 - 📄 Vacancy texts outline what Orpheus Institute has to offer as an employer to every new staff member, for instance in terms of work-life balance.
 - 📄 Clear selection criteria are in place.
 - 📄 Gender balance in selection panels is pursued.
 - 📄 Active scouting and contacting potential female candidates for vacant positions is becoming more and more common practice.
- Orpheus Institute leans on clear employment terms and conditions, stipulated in transparent contracts and agreements for (permanent) staff as well as for grant-funded researchers.
- Orpheus Institute applies the Flemish Staff Regulations for a correct, transparent and gender neutral remuneration policy based on diploma.
- Orpheus Institute offers all staff members (management, research and administrative staff) the chance to follow training and development opportunities that can enhance and enrich their own competences and personal careers and strengthen the organisational culture of the institute. Training does not only focus on the acquisition of (research) knowledge and skills, but equally on personal development (e.g. self-confidence, assertiveness, etc;).
- Orpheus Institute offers staff the opportunity to extend their network and connect with staff and students from international institutions worldwide through mobility programmes, such as the ERASMUS+ mobility projects.
- Orpheus Institute organises leadership development programs and individual coaching sessions for staff: The ConNext Seminar and the Research Summit are 2 examples.

Planned actions

The Orpheus Institute notices that very few women apply for certain positions and that responses to calls for these positions are mainly male. It is particularly difficult to reach women in senior and leading (research) positions, such as PIs and research fellows. The Orpheus Institute wishes to be an attractive employer to everybody, regardless of the position in the organization, regardless gender. For that reason, the institute will optimise the recruitment process to increase the attractiveness of leading jobs for women and therefore takes the following actions:

- Orpheus Institute will continue active scouting (via e.g. personal invitations) for women in leadership positions.
- Orpheus Institute will closely monitor a gender neutral use of language and communication in vacancies:

Gender dimension in research

Current initiatives

For several years, the Orpheus Institute has been giving more attention to an active representation of women in research projects and activities related to research output, by inviting women as guest lecturers or keynote speakers, teachers in the doctoral programme, and representatives in committees, councils, juries and panels.





In addition, the institute has been working for years on raising awareness among our staff members of the importance of gender balance in research: research teams, research results, research structures on both individual and institutional level.

The Orpheus Institute already achieved some successes e.g. in attracting female students for our doctoral programme docARTES, in the composition of (leadership and directional) boards, committees, juries etc, and in our communication strategy.

However, the institute notices that gender equality is a long-term process and that there is still a lot of work to be done. It would therefore like to commit to the actions below in the near future, with the involvement of the whole Orpheus community (staff and students) in order to achieve a healthy gender balance by 2025.

Planned actions

- Orpheus Institute is fully aware of the importance of encouraging the female voice in public. The institute will use various procedures and means to make women's (research) contributions more visible:
 - 📖 Orpheus Institute experiences that the response for calls for proposals or presentations is often uniformly or predominantly male. In the future, the institute will focus on specific communication and dissemination tools that might develop more attraction for women.
 - 📖 Orpheus Institute will pay much more attention to female role models and success stories via its communication. The institute will increase women's visibility (researchers and)keynote speakers) via social media, facebook, website, etc. and highlight female researchers, keynotes and women led projects by means of these channels.
 - 📖 Orpheus Institute ensures that our communication tools take into account an inclusive and gender-balanced representation of the institute, both in text and images/visuals. In the past, the institute experienced that this leads to attracting more female participants to conferences, encouraging underrepresented guest speakers and focusing on new angles and research approaches.
 - 📖 In the framework of conferences and other public events, Orpheus Institute will strive to ensure a 50/50 gender balance for invited speakers and external guests.
- Orpheus Institute will continue to encourage the awareness of gender dimension in research and education:
 - 📖 Gender equality will be implemented in Orpheus' mission statement and made public on the website.

-  Organising workshops and lectures on gender dimension in research (and research outcomes) will be placed high on Orpheus' agenda. The institute will appeal on and actively look for external specialists / consultants on gender equality and inclusion in research (and in the workplace and institutional structures). Besides, Orpheus staff will be encouraged to continue following webinars and trainings on inclusion, diversity and gender balance in cooperation with other partners (e.g. Webinar Leadership and Inclusion organised by KU Leuven Instituut voor de Overheid)
 -  Orpheus Institute will consciously implement gender topics in its research activities, such as conferences, seminars, workshops, and study days.
 -  Integrating gender balance topics in the docARTES doctoral programme makes students aware of the importance of gender equality already at the beginning of their careers. Therefore, Orpheus Institute will ensure that gender equality is not only represented in the teaching staff and the student population, but also implemented in the training modules of the doctoral programme.
 -  The GEP will be made accessible for all staff members via meetings (steering committee meetings, general assemblies, board meetings, etc), via the website and via an internal intra muros platform. All actions related to GEP (workshops, lectures, etc.) will be communicated to the Orpheus staff. They will be encouraged to participate. The Orpheus office members are responsible for the announcement and dissemination of such actions.
- Orpheus Institute will highlight gender and gender identity by giving special attention to e.g. the international women's day, the international woman's day in science, administrative professionals' day, dag van de schoonmaak, etc.

Gender related harassment

Current initiatives

- Orpheus Institute commits itself to act in accordance with the principles of respect for the human being, social justice, equal opportunities, protection of the diversity, accuracy and cultural honesty and transparency thereby widening the training of highly qualified professionals to conscious and active European citizenship.
- Orpheus Institute is committed to ensuring that all doctoral students and staff, also those with fewer opportunities, have access to a quality learning experience and an open research space, and have the opportunity to pursue their academic goals in a safe, supportive learning and research environment.
- The Equal Opportunities Policy of the Orpheus Institute aims to ensure that no student, staff member or visitor is subjected to unfair discrimination. The Orpheus Institute will not discriminate unfairly on the grounds of age, disability, marital status, race, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation or other such unjustifiable cause. The Orpheus Institute will endeavour through equal opportunities action to create an environment in which students and staff give due respect to other people and their work or ideas.
- Orpheus Institute has an office member in place who acts as the (confidential) contact person and adviser for questions or reports about verbal or physical aggression, discrimination, unfair treatment, bullying or sexual harassment.
- The office member keeps track of the data and reports to the director, the steering committee and the board of governors who give feedback and advise on the implementation of preventive measures in the work policy of the Orpheus Institute.

Planned actions

The Orpheus Institute will continue monitoring the measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment. The institute will work out and implement detailed instructions and procedures for staff and students in situations where harassment (sexual, background, ...), discrimination (financial, career, age, ...) and violence occur. This will also be incorporated into the employment regulations.

Monitoring and data gathering

Current initiatives

- Orpheus Institute gathers meticulous data for the annual reports to the government and external evaluations which take place every five years. The figures relate to the institute's various stakeholder groups: researchers (senior and junior), management (directors), administrative and support staff, board of governors, general assembly, keynote speakers and presenters (conferences, seminars, etc.), visiting professors, doctoral students, admissions committees and juries, various councils and working groups. Orpheus Institute's size does not allow it to set up or appoint diversity committees, for example. Therefore, the institute chooses the path of entrusting tasks on diversity and gender equality to the existing operating structure. The liaison officer keeps track of the data, the communication coordinator promotes and monitors gender-neutral communication (internally and externally), the director and board of governors are responsible for the institutional inclusion policy, the director of research and the steering committee oversee the implementation of gender balance in the research centre and context (research topics, researchers, keynotes, etc) and the doctoral programme coordinator focus in the awareness and implementation of gender topics in the doctoral programme.

Planned actions

- Orpheus Institute will monitor the figures even more carefully. The existing methodology will be extended with new approaches. For instance, the institute will also track how many women applied for new recruitment (vacancies, students) and quantify and analyse how many people (women and men) use parental leave and care credit.
- Orpheus Institute will continue to monitor the numerical material on gender on a yearly basis. The institute will not only use this material for reporting purposes, but also to attract underrepresented groups and to encourage nationally and internationally (gender)diverse talent in leadership positions, in the student community, but also in decision-making boards and committees, guest researchers and speakers, and other stakeholders. In doing so, the institute aims to implement diversity in our institute, broaden perspectives in research and teaching and enrich the scientific discourse.
- Figures and analysis will be made public to staff and disseminated to all stakeholders.

The Orpheus Institute, its management team and its board of governors support the above mentioned actions as part of its own commitment to gender equality, and to diversity and inclusion within the institute's (research) community.



Peter Dejans
Director



Jonathan Impett
Director of Research