

Gender Equality Plan for the National Science Centre 2022-2025

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I. INTRODUCTION

The “Gender Equality Plan for the National Science Centre 2022-2025” (hereinafter referred to as the “Plan”) was developed in response to the Horizon Europe (HE) Framework Programme for 2021-2027¹, which sets actions aimed at ensuring gender equality in research and innovation as a cross-cutting priority. The mission of the National Science Centre, as an executive agency established to support basic research, is to enhance research quality and efficiency through a competitive grant system and strengthen the importance of Polish science in the international arena. This mission is to be accomplished by funding research projects and activities through a system of calls for proposals. The portfolio of the NCN features calls targeted at researchers at all levels, regardless of age, seniority, and affiliation. Since the agency holds up the diversity of perspectives and experiences as a value that fosters the growth of science, its practices attract researchers from a wide range of social groups; the NCN actively supports gender equality at Polish academic centres and joins dedicated international initiatives. Levelling the playing field for applying for NCN funds and prioritising the criterion of research excellence in the peer review process is the main principle that has guided the NCN ever since its foundation.

As an employer, the NCN stands by the principle of equality both in its recruitment process and its HR and payroll policies.

The “Gender Equality Plan” integrates two aspects: it describes the gender equality actions and mechanisms that are already in place at the NCN ([part 2: DIAGNOSIS](#)) and the initiatives and solutions that still need to be implemented, including specific actions and their indicators ([part 3: GOALS](#)).

Both these aspects are approached in the Plan through the lens of the two dimensions of the NCN:

- as an institution (employer),
- as a research-funding executive agency.

In the [summary section](#), all the previously discussed existing mechanisms and planned solutions are mapped onto the four mandatory process-related requirements and five recommended thematic areas of gender equality plans laid down by the European Commission (EC).

The NCN has met the CE’s requirements for effective gender equality plans by:

- involving a wide group of NCN employees and NCN Council members in the development and implementation of the Plan,
- designing tailored solutions, especially to support the principle of gender equality in basic research funding, which respect its mission, goals, tasks and context,
- focusing not only on procedural and institutional solutions but also areas of implicit bias, as well as shaping attitudes by improving the knowledge about gender equality,

¹Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0695&from=EN>.

- creating a model for institutional change, which involves diagnosing and assessing NCN practices and procedures, identifying the areas that require reform, setting goals and selecting the means to achieve them, as well as defining the best indicators to monitor their progress,
- supporting a process of continual change toward greater gender equality by monitoring the progress in achieving the goals set in the Plan².

The implementation of the Plan is scheduled for the next three years; in 2025, the NCN will verify its goals, actions and indicators and may decide to extend it.

II. DIAGNOSIS

1. NCN as employer

Recruitment process

The HR and payroll team responsible for candidate recruitment abides by the principle that a careful selection of talent is the key to success.

The people we hire will determine the quality of our human potential and the possibilities for its future growth and improvement. Employees involved at every stage of the candidate selection process are fully aware of their role and understand their responsibility to ensure equal treatment for all.

Job postings for any NCN vacancies are advertised in the Public Information Bulletin, online, and through various channels offered by academic career advice centres. Formulated in a neutral language, they are meant to reach a broad range of potential male and female candidates. Any phrasing that stands in contradiction to the principles of equality and diversity or makes reference to any preferences or stereotypes is carefully avoided.

Postings always include information on the benefits package that helps maintain a work-life balance (e.g. flexible working hours, stable employment conditions, the Multisport card, and group insurance).

The list of candidates who will be invited for an interview is drawn up by at least two independent recruiters, and the choice is made solely on the basis of merit. During the interview, candidates are given a chance to show off their skills and qualifications, as well as ask questions to learn more about the job. Recruiters are instructed to avoid asking about marital status. All questions are designed to collect information on the skills and qualifications that may be important in the role for which the candidate is applying.

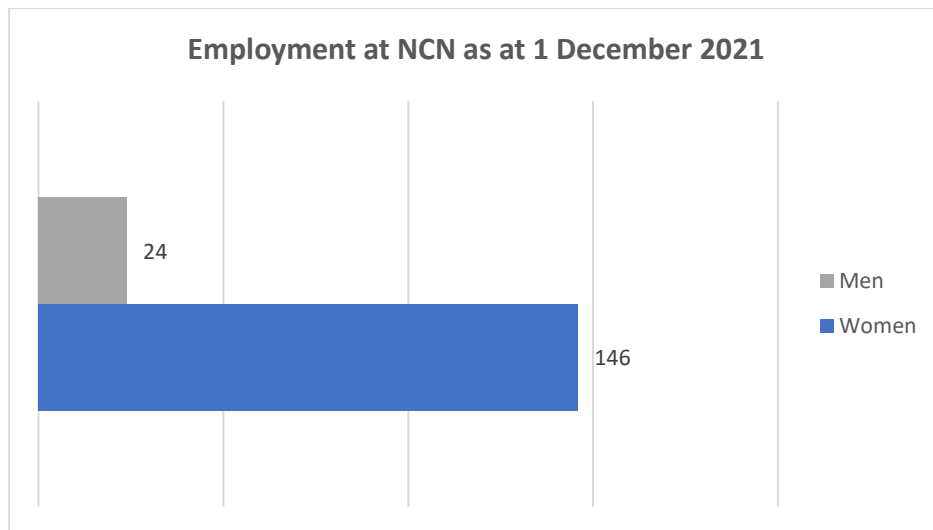
After the end of the recruitment process, the committee selects the appropriate candidate as soon as possible and immediately notifies them of its decision. This approach allows us to avoid situations in which our candidate of choice accepts another job offer. A good practice that our recruiters espouse

² Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans, European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Directorate D — People, Unit D4 — Democracy and European values, Brussels 2021, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffcb06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-232129669>, s. 11-15.

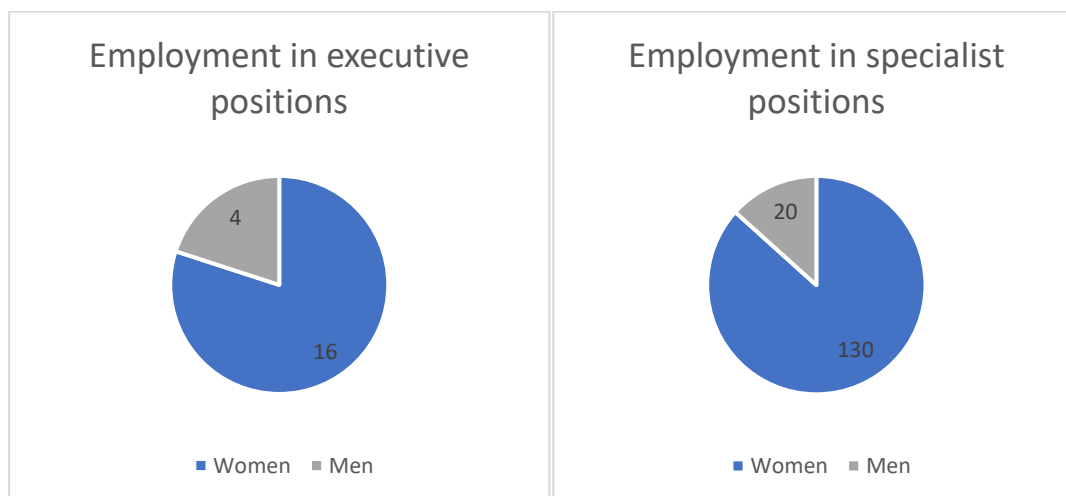
is to also send the results of the interview also to the applicants who were turned down. At the end of the recruitment process, the committee draws up a protocol that presents the data of all candidates.

Employment structure

As of 1 December 2021, the NCN had 170 employees on its payroll, including 146 women and 24 men.



There are 16 women and 4 men in executive positions. We also employ 130 female and 20 male specialists (data as of 1 December 2021).



The National Science Centre is a family-friendly employer. Work and family are the two most important areas of human life, which is why a major emphasis must be put on actions that facilitate transitioning back to work after parental leave and create flexible working hours to meet the needs of working parents. The NCN provides such opportunities by introducing the following solutions:

- a) flexible working hours – in accordance with the NCN's policy manual, employees may begin their workday anytime between 7:00 and 8:30, while those in executive roles may start between 7:00 and 10:00,
- b) employees may work remotely on two days per week; in situations of high epidemiological risk, the number of days is increased in line with the needs; the principles that govern

teleworking are laid down in the Remote Work Policy introduced by Order No 52/2021 issued by the NCN Director,

- c) an employee who is a parent may apply for more days of remote work in the event of the child's illness, quarantine, home isolation or other unforeseen situation; their requests have a 99% approval rate. In order to work remotely, employees need to notify their superior, but there is no formal procedure to follow; the solution relies on mutual trust and is always geared towards making it easier for our employees to reconcile their work and family life,
- d) vacation dates can be adapted to the family needs of our employees,
- e) an employee who goes on parental leave receives a baby layette set; the NCN also tries to stay in touch with staff away on parental leave by inviting them e.g. to Christmas dinners or team-building events,
- f) employees who are away on parental leave continue to benefit from the Employee Social Benefit Fund, their group insurance, sports card, and work equipment (laptop, mobile phone),
- g) employees who are away on parental leave are still included in promotions and pay increases,
- h) all NCN employees are invited to attend courses devoted to work-life balance, reconciling work and family life, time management, and awareness of the self and others. Stress management courses in particular are now growing in popularity. We employ many entry-level staff, who are at the planning stage of their future careers; thanks to us, they enjoy access to a broad range of commercial courses and can share their suggestions with superiors, which gives them a sense of agency in their own growth.

Since 2011, the NCN has given:

- maternity leave to 60 women,
- parental leave to 51 women,
- childcare leave to 24 women (10 have not returned to work),
- paternity leave to 10 men.

Since 2011, the average number of sick leave days during pregnancy at the NCN has been 192,82.

Since 2011, 57 people have been hired to work as a substitute for an employee away on leave; out of this number, 12 people (9 women and 3 men) continue to work with us on fixed-term or indefinite employment contracts.

Since 2011, NCN employees have had more than 90 children.

The NCN has the following teams and committees:

- Staff Representatives: 2 people, including 1 woman and 1 man,
- Employer Representatives: 2 women,
- Social Committee: 3 people, including 2 women and 1 man,
- Ethics Committee: 6 people, including 5 women and 1 man,
- Anti-mobbing committee: 3 people, including 2 women and 1 man,
- Asset Evaluation Team: 3 people, including 1 woman and 2 men,
- Research Integrity Committee: 5 people, including 3 women and 2 men,
- Risk committee: 7 people, including 6 women and 1 man,
- Gender Equality Plan Team: 10 people, including 7 women and 3 men.

The National Science Centre wants to protect its employees against discrimination, unequal treatment, and mobbing. To that end, it has drawn up internal procedures, such as the Anti-Mobbing Policy and the dedicated Code of Ethics of the NCN Director, Deputy Director, Discipline Coordinators and staff³, enforced both by the employer and staff representatives. For this purpose, we have set up designated bodies: the Ethics Committee, the Anti-mobbing Committee, and the Staff Representatives.

2. Gender equality in basic research funding

NCN call portfolio

The statutory tasks of the NCN include funding basic research. To that end, the agency announces regular calls under which it finances research fellowships, activities and projects. The calls are targeted at researchers at all levels, and, mostly, from all disciplines of science.

In response to the voices of the research community, NCN decided to follow the example of the European Research Council and extend the period under NCN calls to include possible career breaks. The eligibility period may be extended to account for documented, long-term sick leave or rehabilitation leave (more than 90 days), which renders the individual unable to work. It may also be prolonged to account for time spent on parental leave, awarded in accordance with the Labour Code, and for women, by 18 months for each child born or adopted, depending on which option is more advantageous.

Adding career breaks also extends the period in which the required research record (such as academic papers and research projects) may be produced, as well as the period of eligibility for postdocs and senior researcher positions.

The NCN proposal form includes a questionnaire concerning the research record of the principal investigator, which includes elements of a narrative CV in a section devoted to the main research achievement and makes it possible to list other important achievements in science. This solution is designed to support researchers who have had to put their research careers on hold due to external factors (such as e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic).

The NCN call portfolio features the MINIATURA call, under which applicants may submit proposals for a single research activity, such as a preliminary/pilot studies, library searches, fellowships, research visits and/or consultations. The main objective of the call is to provide financial support for research that will lay the foundations for a future research project to be submitted under an NCN call, or another domestic or international call. Applicants may receive funds for a task that takes up to 12 months to complete. The call is targeted at researchers employed on an employment contract, who submit their proposal within 12 years from earning their PhD degree. That period may be extended in accordance with the principles applied in other NCN calls to account for maternity leave and other long career breaks associated with a temporary inability to work. MINIATURA provides people who have not previously won any grants a chance to start out on their own research; it also offers funding opportunities to those who transition back to work after a longer hiatus. Preliminary research carried out under MINIATURA will later enable them to apply for other calls, launched by the NCN and other grant agencies.

³ Order No 55/2017 of the NCN Director amending the Code of Ethics of the NCN Director, Deputy Director, Discipline Coordinators and Staff of 5 September 2017.
https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/zarzadzenia-dyrektora/zarzadzenieDyr-55_2017.pdf.

Survey on men and women in science

In early 2019, the NCN took a stand on the issue of equal access to research funds and committed itself to continue its efforts to ensure gender equality and diversity in science⁴.

In 2021, it conducted a survey on men and women in science. The survey was open to researchers at any level from all research centres, regardless of whether they have ever applied for an NCN grant. The questionnaire was available on the NCN's website between 19 July and 30 September 2021 and was filled out by nearly 6,000 respondents. Researchers were asked about their experience applying for NCN grants, any difficulties they may have faced in accessing other domestic and international funds, their experiences in their workplace, and the challenges of work and family balance. The survey also featured questions on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their career and research performance.

The survey report, drawn up by the NCN Evaluation Team and the Committee of Research Activity Analysis of the NCN Council, was published on 16 February 2022. The report indicates that men and women apply for research funding for very similar reasons. The dominant factors include a desire to develop their research, continue projects, and advance in their careers. However, women are much more likely to doubt their chances of success in securing research funds. Critical of their own research record and doubtful of their odds of success, they frequently decide not to respond to domestic and international calls at all. Women are also more likely to say they feel their research institution has failed to support them in the application process, as well as report not having adequate information about the calls. More often than men, female respondents also say they struggle to strike a work and family balance and report feelings of remorse for neglecting their families.

Both men and women express equal interest in taking on the role of a principal investigator under a research project. However, men are more likely than women to opt for the role of contractor in order to avoid the administrative burdens associated with the former status.

The survey also featured questions about working under the COVID-19 pandemic and the experiences of male and female respondents in their work environment.

The report will be the subject of further analysis and reflection so as to guide future actions at the NCN.

The report is available on the official website of the NCN⁵.

Information, promotion and reporting

Information about the participation of men and women in NCN calls is published in the "Annual Reports" and "Call Statistics", published every year in printed and online versions. The activities of men

⁴ Position of the National Science Centre on equal access to research funds for men and women of 14 February 2019,

https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/2019_02_stanowisko_ncn_ws_rownego_dostepu_kobiet_i_mezczyzn.pdf.

⁵ Men and women in science. NCN survey results, February 2022, https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/funkcjonowanie_kobiet_i_mezczyzn_w_nauce_wyniki_sondazu_NCn.pdf

and women are represented in percentages, broken down into groups of disciplines: arts, humanities and social sciences; life sciences; physical sciences and engineering, and a separate category for each NCN call. The documents also present detailed data by gender, including the number of submissions, the amount of funding applied for under each call, as well as the number of successful projects and the grant amount awarded.

The website of the NCN features a database of call winner profiles. The database is expanded on an ongoing basis and the projects it presents are conducted by researchers of both genders.

The NCN website also provides a tool that allows users to generate their own statistical reports on previous calls. Such reports may include criteria such as group of sciences, panel, year, call type, host institution type and scientific degree, and voivodeship. The tool allows general trends to be captured and, as such, may serve as an effective instrument to verify the goals and policies implemented by the NCN.

The UN General Assembly designated 11 February as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. In 2022, the event offered a pretext for the NCN to launch a little social media campaign to promote women's presence in science. Over 5 days, NCN pages on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram published profiles of outstanding female researchers, offered information on their NCN-funded projects, and allowed them to speak in their own voices, as they shared examples of good practices aimed at levelling the playing field for men and women in science.

Cooperation on AcademiaNet

In 2019, the NCN signed an agreement with the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), in which the two institutions agreed to co-fund a project called AcademiaNet (<http://www.academia-net.org/>). AcademiaNet is an online platform that publishes the profiles of outstanding female scientists for the general public; it is continually updated and maintained by the SNSF from the contributions of its partners. The platform helps promote Polish researchers by making it easier for them to forge international contacts and engage in joint projects with foreign partners; it also provides an extensive database, in which the NCN can find experts and reviewers to evaluate proposals submitted under its domestic and international calls. Polish candidates were recommended to AcademiaNet by the NCN in the middle of 2020.

Cooperation on GRANteD

The National Science Centre is also a stakeholder in a project known as "Grant Allocation Disparities" (GRANteD), carried out by Joanneum Research, Orebro University, the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), the German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies (DZHW), Teresa Mom Consultancy, and Forskningspolitik Sverige AB. The purpose of the project is to design the tools necessary to analyse and solve the problem of gender bias in grant allocation and the resulting disparities. The research will contribute to a better understanding of the complex nature of gender inequalities in research and grant allocation, as well as research career development. It will also raise awareness of the prejudices that exist in the field and contribute to creating a more just grant system.

Besides the NCN, other stakeholders in the project include agencies from Austria (FWF), Ireland (SFI), Slovakia (APVV), Switzerland (SNF), Sweden (SRC) and the Netherlands (NWO), as well as the European University Association and Science Europe.

The project is funded from the resources of the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 programme.

Proposal review process

Both the documentation and the practice of peer review in the evaluation of research proposals submitted to the NCN are informed by the principle of gender equality.

An important role in this respect is played by NCN Discipline Coordinators (hereinafter referred to as the “Coordinators”), whose tasks include e.g. checking individual assessments for any discriminatory content. A check of this kind is performed in several stages, i.e. before the meeting of the Expert Team at stage 1 of peer review (verification of individual reviews drawn up by team members), and then again during Expert Team meetings at stage 2 and 3; this also applies to the reviews submitted by external experts at stage 2. The coordinator is obliged to point out any phrases that may be considered discriminatory to the Expert Team.

The principle of gender equality also informs the documents and materials related to the peer review process, which are shared with the reviewers, i.e.:

a) Guide for experts evaluating proposals in NCN calls⁶

The document contains detailed information on the peer review of proposals submitted to the NCN. In their assessments, our experts are expected to place an emphasis on research excellence and avoid any reference to the age, nationality, gender, or private affairs of the applicant. The language of their reviews must be objective, analytical, unambiguous, and where critical comments are made – constructive, non-offensive, and content-oriented⁷. A coordinator is delegated to keep watch over the review process and check expert reviews for any comments on age, nationality or gender. The assessment of the research record must always account for career breaks; the research record of each principal investigator is evaluated individually, based on data included in the proposal and the current career level. Experts are required to assess the merits of the project solely on the basis of information included in the proposal

b) Code of Ethics for Experts of the National Science Centre⁸

An invitation that is initially sent out to reviewers clearly sets out the ethical principles that should inform the peer review process. Individual expert reviews should respect the principle of confidentiality and protect personal data included in the proposal. Experts are obliged to

⁶ https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/2016-02-19_Przewodnik_dla_Ekspertow.pdf

⁷ https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/2016-02-19_Przewodnik_dla_Ekspertow.pdf, s. 5.

⁸ <https://www.ncn.gov.pl/finansowanie-nauki/dla-ekspertow/zasady-etyczne-ekspertow-ncn>

adhere to ethical principles at every review stage and divulge any conflict of interest that may arise due to a family relationship, professional collaboration, personal relations, contrasting academic perspectives, or prior involvement in the preparation of the proposal. If a conflict of interest exists, experts are required to promptly notify the coordinator. The coordinator may exclude an expert from the proposal review process when there is a well-grounded suspicion of bias. Depending on the context, the exclusion may be partial or complete. The Code of Ethics adopted by the NCN requires that experts should not make any reference to the age, nationality, gender or any other aspects of private life mentioned in the proposal. The language of their reviews should be objective and analytical; it must not include any colloquial, offensive or ambiguous expressions. The coordinator is responsible for ensuring the diligence and impartiality of expert reviews. Before starting on the review process, experts are required to accept the Code of Ethics.

c) **Video about the NCN peer review process**⁹

In response to the specific needs of Expert Teams, the NCN has released a video that explains review process in simple and concise terms.

It will be supplemented by a call to include the demands of gender equality in the review process.

In November 2021, the NCN organised a workshop for employees working in selected organisational cells, including coordinators, about implicit bias and discrimination. Such training courses will also be organised for NCN staff in the future.

Detailed data on the gender distribution of NCN grant applicants and winners, Expert Teams, and the NCN Council in 2010-2021 can be found in Annex 2 to this Plan.

NCN panels

The remote session model, which was introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, may encourage female researchers to join in the activities of Expert Teams. The NCN works to increase female representation in the role of Team's Chair.

The most frequent reasons men and women list for their refusal to sit on NCN Expert Teams include teaching duties, conference trips, and personal situations, such as an illness of a relative.

NCN Award

The National Science Centre Award was created by the NCN Council in 2013 with the aim of recognising the outstanding achievements of young researchers under the age of 40 within the framework of basic research conducted in Poland and documented by publications affiliated with a Polish research Centre. Worth 50,000 zlotys, the award is handed out annually in three groups of disciplines: arts, humanities, and social sciences; life sciences; and physical sciences and engineering. Candidates for the award may be nominated by former NCN Council members, the Polish chairs of Expert Teams that assess proposals under NCN calls, former Polish experts reviewing proposals under the MAESTRO call, NCN award

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoBxwLsalK8&>

winners from previous years, as well as other prominent researchers, appointed by the NCN Director and the NCN Council. The final decision is made by a jury composed of NCN Council members, the NCN Director, and sponsor representatives.

Since 2013, the NCN award has been given out nine times. Its 27 winners include four women, three of which won an award in life sciences, and one in art, humanities and social sciences.

Research projects

Our priority is to create a clear, researcher-friendly grant system, based on transparent principles that guide the implementation of projects qualified for funding. NCN-funded projects should be conducted in accordance with the funding agreement; changes are allowed, as long as they are warranted by the scope of research and the tasks planned in the project, as well as conducive to their ends. Whether the changes are warranted or not is evaluated at the final project assessment stage or during a potential audit¹⁰.

The duration of the project, for instance, can be extended with the permission of the host institution's director for up to 12 months from its initial end date (e.g. for health, family or personal reasons). To extend the project for more than 12 months, the principal investigator must apply for approval to the NCN.

Final project evaluation

The Code of Ethics for Experts of the National Science Centre mentioned above⁸ also applies to the process of drawing up the assessment of final reports for projects, postdoctoral fellowships, PhD scholarships and research activities, which are subject to financial and merit-based evaluation. Final reports must be submitted to the NCN by the host institution's director and the principal investigator within 60 days from the end date of the project. In justified cases, related e.g. to the family situation or personal affairs of the principal investigator, the NCN may agree to extend the deadline for the final report.

¹⁰https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/2018_02_06_pismo_dyrektora_ncn_ujednolicenie_zasad_realizacji_projektow.pdf

III. GOALS

1) NCN as employer

Planned actions:

Goal 1: Including gender information on staff in NCN's annual activity reports

| Goal | Action | Indicator | Target group |
|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Including gender information on staff in NCN's annual activity reports | Including data on NCN staff's gender breakdown in annual reports/activity reports | Annual publication of any changes in the gender breakdown in annual reports/activity reports. | All NCN employees |

Responsible entities: HR and Payroll Team, Evaluation Team, Information and Promotion Team

Schedule: annually until 2025, possibly to be extended.

Goal 2: Raising awareness of the importance of gender equality and increasing gender balance in the recruitment process and NCN staff

| Goal | Action | Indicator | Target group |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Raising awareness of the importance of gender equality and increasing gender balance in the recruitment process | Training courses for NCN recruiters and managers on how to avoid gender discrimination in recruitment | Delivering the course to at least 50% of NCN staff and recruiters by the end of 2025 | NCN recruiters and managers |
| Raising awareness of the importance of gender equality and increasing gender balance among NCN staff | In-person, online, or webinar group courses on how to avoid gender discrimination | Delivering the course to at least 60% of NCN staff by the end of 2025 | NCN staff |

Responsible entities: HR and Payroll Team

Schedule: until 2025, possibly to be extended

Goal 3: Including actions aimed to ensure equal treatment and combat discrimination in NCN's anti-mobbing policy

| Goal | Action | Indicator | Target group |
|---|---|---|---------------|
| Including actions aimed to ensure equal treatment and combat discrimination in NCN's anti-mobbing policy | Amending Order No 47/2017 of the NCN Director introducing the Internal Anti-Mobbing Policy of the National Science Centre: changing the name, as well as the scope of tasks and prerogatives of the Anti-Mobbing Committee to ensure equal treatment and combat discrimination on the basis of gender, age, nationality, religious denomination, etc. | Entry into force of the amended Order introducing an Internal Policy for equal treatment, combating discrimination and preventing mobbing at the National Science Centre | All NCN staff |

Responsible entities: HR and Payroll Team, Legal Team

Schedule: by the end of 2023

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Training courses for members of the Committee for Equal Treatment, Combating Discrimination, and Preventing Mobbing to raise awareness of discrimination and explain how to recognise and react to the phenomenon. | Training all the members of the Committee for Equal Treatment, Combating Discrimination, and Preventing Mobbing | Committee for Equal Treatment, Combating Discrimination, and Preventing Mobbing |
|--|---|---|

Responsible entities: HR and Payroll Team

Schedule: by the end of 2024

| | | | |
|--|---|--|-------------------|
| | Preparing and sending out a message on how and where to report instances of discrimination to all NCN employees | Sending the message by e-mail to all NCN employees | All NCN employees |
|--|---|--|-------------------|

Responsible entities: HR and Payroll Team

Schedule: by the end of 2022

| | | | |
|--|---|---|-------------------|
| | Preparing a “welcome package” for new employees to introduce them to the mission, values and principles of the NCN; the package should include practical tips on how and where to report any problems with discrimination | Sharing the “welcome package” with every new employee during the onboarding process | New NCN employees |
|--|---|---|-------------------|

Responsible entities: HR and Payroll Team, Information and Promotion Team

Schedule: by the end of 2022

2) Gender equality in basic research funding

The goal of the NCN is to level the playing field for all researchers applying for funds, while prioritising the criterion of research excellence in the proposal evaluation process.

Planned actions:

Goal 1: Raising awareness of the importance of gender equality in NCN's information and promotion campaigns

| Goal | Action | Indicator | Target group |
|--|--|---|--|
| Raising awareness of the importance of gender equality in NCN's information and promotion campaigns | Spreading information on the idea of equality and diversity through NCN's information channels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Publishing researcher profiles (respecting the principle of gender equality) on the website of the NCN, as well as in its publications, such as annual reports and information brochures; – publishing at least two interviews per year with women who are successful in male-dominated disciplines and two interviews with men who have won calls in female-dominated disciplines on the NCN website; – publishing at least two interviews per year with winners of NCN calls about how they reconcile work and family life on the website of the NCN; – A Week of Women in Science – a little social media campaign, organised every February to promote women in science. The campaign will involve publishing a series of posts on NCN's social media to present the | General public in the broadest sense; NCN applicants |

profiles of women scientists, winners of NCN grants, their projects, and examples of good practices designed to level the playing field for men and women in science.

Responsible entities: Information and Promotion Team

Schedule: every year until 2025, possibly to be extended

Goal 2: Including gender equality aspects in the NCN application forms

| Goal | Action | Indicator | Target group |
|---|---|--|----------------|
| Including gender equality aspects in the NCN application forms | <p>Sessions of the Policy Committee of the NCN Council aimed at modifying the questionnaire on the research record of the Principal Investigator in NCN application forms: extending the narrative CV section (in addition to the current <i>TOP IMPORTANT RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENT</i> existing section, which will allow to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – account for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the applicants' research career; – assess the quality of the research record based on merit rather than merely | <p>Adding a guideline "Other important information that have had an impact on the course of academic career" to the instructions on required information</p> | NCN applicants |

quantitative
criteria

Responsible entities: Policy and Procedure Committee of the NCN Council

Schedule: by the end of 2022

Goal 3: Emphasising the importance of gender equality in the documentation and practice of proposal review

| Goal | Action | Indicator | Target group |
|---|--|---|----------------|
| Emphasising the importance of gender equality in the documentation and practice of proposal review | Sessions of the Policy Committee of the NCN Council aimed at including the criterion of gender and gender identity of studied object in project assessment | Adopting modified proposal assessment criteria to include the gender and gender identity of studied objects | NCN applicants |

Responsible entities: Policy and Procedure Committee of the NCN Council

Schedule: by the end of 2022

| | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|
| Analysing to what extent expert reviewers (Expert Team members) and applicants include gender equality issues and the gender identity of studied objects in the assessment of proposals submitted to the NCN | Performing an evaluation of the review process based on criteria that include the gender and gender identity of studied objects | Expert reviewers; applicants |
|--|---|------------------------------|

Responsible entities: Discipline Coordinators, Evaluation Team

Schedule: by the end of 2025, possibly to be extended

| | | |
|---|--|-------------|
| Updating the Guide for Experts evaluating proposals under NCN calls | Including a recommendation that experts should use neutral language and gender-neutral pronouns (e.g. <i>“they”</i> instead of <i>“he”/“she”</i>) | NCN experts |
|---|--|-------------|

Responsible entities: Discipline Coordinators

Schedule: by the end of 2024

| | | |
|---|---|-------------|
| Updating the Code of Ethics for Experts of the National Science Centre and the briefings delivered to the experts by Coordinators | Emphasising the importance of equality issues in the Code of Ethics and the briefings | NCN experts |
|---|---|-------------|

Responsible entities: Discipline Coordinators

Schedule: by the end of 2025, and then at regular intervals in the following years

| | | |
|---|--|-------------|
| Updating the video on NCN’s peer review | Including equality issues in the video | NCN experts |
|---|--|-------------|

Responsible entities: Discipline Coordinators

Schedule: by the end of 2025

Goal 4: Raising awareness of the importance of equality issues and improving gender balance in Expert Teams

| Goal | Action | Indicator | Target group |
|--|--|---|--|
| Raising awareness of the importance of equality issues and improving gender balance in Expert Teams | Training courses on gender equality and how to avoid discrimination for NCN coordinators and NCN Council members | Training all NCN coordinators and NCN Council members | NCN coordinators and NCN Council members |

Responsible entities: HR and Payroll Team, Discipline Coordinators

Schedule: by 2025, and then at regular intervals to cover new NCN Council members and coordinators

Goal 5: Raising awareness of the importance of equality issues in the process of giving out the NCN Award

| Goal | Action | Indicator | Target group |
|--|--|---|----------------------|
| Raising awareness of the importance of equality issues in the process of giving out the NCN Award | Changing the Terms and Conditions of the NCN Award | Including career breaks in the NCN Award eligibility period | NCN Award applicants |

Responsible entities: Policy and Procedure Committee of the NCN Council

Schedule: by 2023

IV. SUMMARY

Drawn up based on a multifaceted diagnosis of gender equality actions and mechanisms in place at the NCN, the Gender Equality Plan for the National Science Centre 2022-2025 sets out the main directions for the agency's future activities in support of equal gender rights, both in its capacity as an employer and as a basic research funding agency.

Progress in the implementation of goals described in part 3 of this Plan will be monitored by the Committee for Equal Treatment, Combating Discrimination and Preventing Mobbing of the National Science Centre. The goals and actions specified in the Plan will be implemented between 2022 and 2025 and verified in 2025. The actions may continue in the years that follow, while the goals may be revised.

Sources

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2. Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans, European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Directorate D — People, Unit D4 — Democracy and European values, Brussels 2021, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffcb06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-232129669>
3. Order No 55/2017 of NCN Director amending the Code of Ethics of the NCN Director, Deputy Director, Discipline Coordinators and Staff of 5 September 2017, https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/zarzadzenia-dyrektora/zarzadzenieDyr-55_2017.pdf
4. Position of the National Science Centre on equal access to research funds for men and women of 14 February 2019, https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/2019_02_stanowisko_ncn_ws_rownego_do_stepu_kobiet_i_mezczyzn.pdf
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6. Guide for experts evaluating proposals in NCN calls, https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/pliki/2016-02-19_Przewodnik_dla_Ekspertow.pdf
7. Code of Ethics for Experts of the National Science Centre, <https://www.ncn.gov.pl/finansowanie-nauki/dla-ekspertow/zasady-etyczne-ekspertow-ncn>

Annexes

Annex 1. Existing and planned actions concerning the mandatory and recommended thematic areas of the Gender Equality Plan

Annex 2. Gender distribution of NCN call applicants and winners, Expert Teams, and the NCN Council in 2010-2021

Annex 1. Existing and planned actions concerning the mandatory and recommended thematic areas of the Gender Equality Plan

| Mandatory requirements and recommended thematic areas | Mandatory requirements | | | | Recommended thematic areas | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| | Publication of a document | Dedicated resources | Data collection and monitoring | Training courses | Organisational culture and work-life balance | Gender balance at the executive level and in decision-making | Gender balance in recruitment and career development | Inclusion of the gender dimension in research and teaching content | Combating gender violence, including sexual harassment |
| NCN as employer – diagnosis | | | | | | | | | |
| Recruitment | | + | | + | + | + | + | | |
| NCN training policy | | + | | + | + | | + | | |
| Application of labour law (maternity, parental leave, etc.) | | + | | | + | | + | | + |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Remote work | | | | | + | | + | | |
| Existing solutions and bodies: | | | | | | | | | |
| NCN's Anti-Mobbing Policy and Anti-Mobbing Committee | | + | | | + | | | | + |
| Ethics Committee | | | | | | | | | |
| Staff Reps | | | | | | | | | |
| Gender equality in basic research funding – diagnosis | | | | | | | | | |
| NCN call portfolio | | | | | + | + | | | |
| Information, promotion and reporting | | | + | | + | + | | + | |
| Cooperation on AcademiaNet and GRANTeD | | | + | | + | + | + | + | |
| Proposal review process | | | | + | + | + | + | + | |
| NCN panel organisation | | | | | + | + | | + | |
| Research project implementation | | | | | + | | | + | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| Final project evaluation | | | | | + | | | + | |
| NCN as employer – goals | | | | | | | | | |
| Goal 1: Including gender information on staff in NCN's annual activity reports | | + | + | | | | | | |
| Goal 2: Raising awareness of the importance of gender equality and increasing gender balance in the recruitment process and NCN staff | | + | | + | | | | | |
| Goal 3: Including actions aimed at ensuring equal treatment and combat discrimination in NCN's anti-mobbing policy | | + | | + | | | | | + |
| Gender equality in basic research funding – goals | | | | | | | | | |
| Goal 1: Raising awareness of the importance of gender | | + | + | | | | | | |



| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| equality in NCN's information and promotion campaigns | | | | | | | | | |
| Goal 2: Including gender equality aspects in the NCN application forms | | | | | + | | + | + | |
| Goal 3: Emphasising the importance of gender equality in the documentation and practice of proposal review | | + | | + | + | + | + | + | |
| Goal 4: Raising awareness of the importance of equality issues and improving gender balance in Expert Teams | | | | | + | + | + | + | |
| Goal 5: Raising awareness of the importance of equality issues in the process of giving out the NCN Award | | + | | | | + | + | + | |

Annex 2: Gender distribution of NCN call applicants and winners, Expert Teams, and the NCN Council in 2010-2021