

NCN Gender Equality Plan 2022–2025: Brief Summary of Implementation

Kraków 2025

Introduction

This report presents the NCN Gender Equality Plan 2022–2025: Brief Summary of Implementation (hereinafter: “Plan” or “GEP”). The purpose of the document is to present the implementation of actions set out in the previous Gender Equality Plan, as well as to identify areas in which difficulties were encountered.

The Plan was implemented in a systematic manner throughout 2022–2025. The majority of the expected operations were completed; where necessary, actions were adapted in the course of implementation to reflect changing circumstances and current needs. This report contains a concise summary of the main achievements, as well as a detailed review of actions completed under the NCN Gender Equality Plan 2022–2025. The NCN’s equality policy is ongoing, and the Gender Equality Plan 2026–2029 draws on an analysis of the outcomes of actions taken to date, including conclusions and observations from monitoring.

Summary of Main Achievements

Between 2022 and 2025, a range of actions were taken under the Plan to support equality and an organisational culture grounded in inclusivity and respect.

The achievements stemming from the Plan — in line with the structure of the document itself — relate to two dimensions of NCN’s functioning:

- as an institution (employer);
- as an executive basic-research funding agency.

The main achievements from the implementation of the Plan in the dimension of NCN as an institution (employer) include:

- raising awareness of the importance of equality issues among employees and persons involved in the recruitment process through the organisation of training courses;
- introducing measures aimed at familiarising employees with the procedures for reporting cases of discrimination and other violations of the equal treatment principle (updating the internal policy), and incorporating these matters into the onboarding process for new employees to ensure they are aware of their rights and the support mechanisms available to them.

The implementation of the Plan in the dimension of NCN’s functioning as a basic research-funding agency produced the following outcomes:

- the grant policy rules were amended in order to support equal opportunities in applying for research project funding and the NCN Award; as part of these amendments, the application form was improved in relation to the description of the principal investigator’s research track record, and the proposal evaluation criteria were updated to include the sex and gender identity of studied objects; in addition, the Terms and Conditions of the NCN Award were updated to account for career breaks within the eligibility period for the award;



- greater emphasis was placed on incorporating equality issues into training materials, documentation and briefings delivered by Coordinators; training materials were supplemented with equality-related content in order to raise awareness among Expert Team members of the importance of equal and fair treatment of applicants;
- communication activities were conducted to promote equality and diversity in the research community; these activities included, in particular, the regular publication of researcher profiles and interviews, with care taken to ensure balanced gender representation.

The above-mentioned actions constitute a concise overview of the key actions completed under the Plan. Their implementation contributed to strengthening an organisational culture grounded in the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination, and supported the development of NCN's grant policy from an equality perspective.



Review of Actions Taken

NCN as an employer

Goal	Activity	Implementation Status	Description of Implementation	Notes
Including gender information on staff in NCN's employer annual activity reports	Including data on NCN staff's gender breakdown in annual reports/ activity reports	Completed	A decision was taken to publish gender-disaggregated employment data on the institution's website, as part of the summary document entitled "Gender Distribution of Applicants and Winners of NCN Calls, NCN Experts, NCN Council and Office".	Annual updates to the data are planned, with the possibility of expanding the scope of the analysis.
Raising awareness of the importance of gender equality and increasing gender balance in the recruitment of NCN staff	Training courses for NCN recruiters and managers on how to avoid gender discrimination in recruitment	Completed	In 2025, the training course "Avoiding Gender Discrimination in Recruitment – Increasing Equality and Decision Quality" was delivered. Approximately 60% of the target group participated in the training.	The next training course has been scheduled under the new Gender Equality Plan for NCN.
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	Completed	In 2025, two training courses entitled "Gender Equality and Combating Discrimination – Law, Practice, and Awareness in the Workplace" were delivered in an online format, with participants able to choose their preferred date. Approximately 76% of NCN employees and persons collaborating with NCN under civil-law contracts participated in the training.	The next training courses, covering gender equality, diversity and inclusion in a broader scope, have been scheduled under the new Gender Equality Plan for NCN.
Including actions aimed to ensure equal treatment and non-discrimination in NCN's anti-mobbing policy	Amending Order No 47/2017 by 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.	Completed	The amended Order entered into force (Order No 54/2022 by the NCN Director). In subsequent years, the document was revised, and the applicable Policy was adopted by Order No 51/2024 by the NCN Director. The Policy lays down the principles of equal treatment and non-discrimination. The Equal Treatment, Non-Discrimination, Anti-Mobbing and Anti-Corruption Committee is responsible for the implementation of the Policy.	-
Including actions aimed to ensure equal treatment and non-discrimination in NCN's anti-mobbing policy	Training courses for members of the Equal Treatment, Non-Discrimination and Anti-Mobbing Committee to raise awareness of discrimination and explain how to recognise	Implementation postponed to Q1 2026	Implementation of the action was postponed to Q1 2026 due to a revision of the training concept. The approach adopted assumes an expansion of the training scope to cover not only Committee members, but also NCN employees and management.	The action has been included in the Gender Equality Plan for 2026–2029 and will be implemented in an expanded scope.



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	and react to the phenomenon			
Including actions aimed to ensure equal treatment and non-discrimination in NCN's anti-mobbing policy	Preparing and sending out a message on how and where to report instances of discrimination to all NCN employees	Completed	Whenever amendments are introduced to the Internal Policy for Equal Treatment, Non-Discrimination, Anti-Mobbing, and Anti-Corruption at the National Science Centre, employees receive an e-mail notification informing them of the changes made. The applicable Policy is available to employees in the EZD system. They are required to read it and submit an declaration that they have done so.	-
Including actions aimed to ensure equal treatment and non-discrimination in NCN's anti-mobbing policy	Preparing a "welcome package" for new employees to introduce them to the mission, values and principles of NCN; the package should include practical tips on how and where to report discrimination	Completed	During the onboarding meeting, new employees find out about NCN's activities, structure, mission, benefits and working tools. The next step in the onboarding process is an e-mail from the HR and Payroll Team asking new staff to read the most important NCN regulations, along with a link to where the current version of each can be found. The regulations referenced include the Internal Policy for Equal Treatment, Non-Discrimination, Anti-Mobbing, and Anti-Corruption, as well as the Whistleblowing Policy, together with a note on the requirement to submit a declaration confirming that they have been read. The message also encourages new employees to read the Gender Equality Plan and information on non-pay benefits.	-

Gender Equality in NCN's Basic Research Funding Activities

Goal	Activity	Implementation Status	Description of Implementation	Notes
Raising awareness of the importance of equality-related issues in NCN information and promotional activities	Spreading information on the idea of equality and diversity through NCN's information channels	Completed	Between 2022 and 2025, this objective was pursued on a systematic basis through the publication of researcher profiles across various NCN information channels. When implementing the actions, interviews were published with successful researchers. In practice, the number of interviews published with female researchers was higher than with male researchers. At the same time, care was taken to ensure diversity in the academic disciplines and centres. Interviews were promoted on social	When implementing the action, the interview format was reviewed. The practice of selecting interviewees solely on the basis of gender or discipline, including seeking out representatives of the under-represented gender in a research field, was discontinued. Actions focused primarily on



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			media. Experience shows that greater gender balance should be ensured in future publications. An annual mini-campaign entitled 'Week of Women in Science' was conducted each year. An NCN podcast was also dedicated to gender equality in research	the research achievements of researchers and the diversity of their research
Incorporating gender equality considerations into the application forms submitted to NCN	Sessions of the Policy Committee of NCN Council aimed at modifying the research track record section of the Principal Investigator in NCN application forms: extending the narrative CV section (in addition to the current MOST IMPORTANT RESEARCH ACHIEVEMENTS section), which will allow to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – account for the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the applicants' academic and research career; – assess the quality of the research record based on merit rather than merely quantitative criteria. 	Completed	The modification was introduced and has been in force since the 46th edition of calls, i.e. SONATA BIS 12 and MAESTRO 14, announced in June 2022. Applicants for research projects may include information in their narrative CV that they believe may influence the evaluation of their research career (e.g. regarding extended career breaks or professional activities other than research).	-
Emphasising the importance of gender equality in the documents and proposal evaluation procedure	Sessions of the Policy Committee of the NCN Council aimed at including the criterion of gender and gender identity of studied objects in the evaluation of research projects .	Completed	The amended evaluation criteria, incorporating appropriate consideration of gender and research identity (where relevant to the research presented in the proposal), were introduced from the 45th edition of calls, i.e. OPUS 23 and PRELUDIUM 21 launched in March 2022.	-
Emphasising the importance of gender equality in the documents and proposal evaluation procedure	An analysis of how issues relating to gender equality and gender identity of research subjects are taken into account in the evaluation of funding proposals among the experts conducting evaluations (Expert Team members) and applicants to NCN	Partially completed	No observations relating to the incorporation of gender equality issues and the gender identity of studied objects in the proposal evaluation procedure were recorded in surveys conducted among Expert Team members. A separate analysis of the actual application of this criterion in the content of submitted proposals was not carried out, owing to methodological limitations relating to the scope and comparability of the data.	Further actions in this area have been included in the NCN Gender Equality Plan 2026–2029, with the assumption that further work will be carried out on possible ways of monitoring this matter.
Emphasising the importance of gender equality in the documentation and practice of proposal review	Updating the Guide for Experts evaluating proposals under NCN calls	Completed	The Coordinators Department developed the Guidelines for Experts , laying down essential information on the proposal evaluation procedure, the organisation and conduct of Expert Team meetings, as well as ethical	-



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Emphasising the importance of gender equality in the documentation and practice of proposal review	Updating the Code of Ethics for Experts of the National Science Centre and the briefings delivered to the experts by Coordinators	Completed	<p>matters. It also includes guidance on preparing individual reviews. A recommendation to use gender-neutral language in assessments was incorporated, and other principles supporting equality and inclusivity were emphasised</p> <p>The Code of Ethics for Experts of the National Science Centre contains an appropriate provision indicating that when preparing an assessment, an Expert should not refer to the age, nationality, gender, or any aspects of the private life of the Principal Investigator/Co-investigator. These guidelines were additionally emphasised in the Guidelines for Experts. Coordinators organise regular training courses for Experts after the formation of Expert Teams and before the drafting of individual reviews. The training includes a section on equality. Coordinators alone emphasise the importance of these principles during Expert Team meetings</p>	-
Emphasising the importance of gender equality in the documents and proposal evaluation procedure	Updating the video on NCN's peer review	Completed	The video was updated to include a section on the importance of equality and information that generative artificial intelligence must not be used for review purposes	-
Raising awareness of the importance of equality issues and improving gender balance across Expert Teams (NCN)	Training courses on gender equality and non-discrimination for NCN Coordinators and Council members	Completed	In 2025, two training courses entitled "Equality and Inclusivity in Research Funding Policies" were delivered in an online format, with participants able to choose their preferred date	The next training courses have been scheduled under the new Gender Equality Plan for NCN
Raising awareness of the importance of equality issues in the NCN Award selection process	Changing the Terms and Conditions of the NCN Award	Completed	The NCN Council has amended the Terms and Conditions of the NCN Award. The document has been in force since 2024. The most significant modification concerns the age criterion for candidates who may be nominated for the award. The chronological age limit (up to 40 years of age) was replaced by an academic age limit (up to 12 years from the year of PhD award date). Career breaks for candidates of all genders were taken into account.	-



Conclusions and Closing Remarks

The implementation of the NCN Gender Equality Plan 2022–2025 enabled the introduction of actions aimed at incorporating the principles of equal treatment into NCN’s institutional operations and grant policy. The majority of planned actions were completed, with some adapted to reflect changing circumstances and the experience gained in the course of their practical application. Selected solutions were permanently embedded in standard procedures, particularly in the area of training, information and promotion activities, and the proposal evaluation procedure. At the same time, areas requiring further work were identified, which is reflected in the NCN Gender Equality Plan 2026–2029, prepared drawing on the conclusions and observations from monitoring of the actions taken to date. This report constitutes a brief summary of the implementation of the Plan and forms part of NCN’s efforts to ensure transparency in its actions relating to gender equality, diversity and non-discrimination.