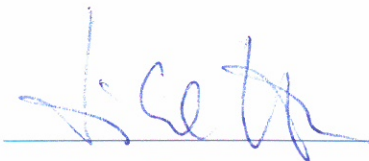


# Gender Equality Plan

of  
the German Rheumatology Research Center –  
a Leibniz Institute

**Updated: April 2025**  
*(preparation for the 2<sup>nd</sup> period 31.01.2026 till 31.12.2030)*



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# 1. Introduction

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) of the German Rheumatism Research Center Berlin – A Leibniz Institute (DRFZ) outlines key principles, objectives, and measures to foster equal opportunities for all employees. Until full professional equality is achieved, particular focus will remain on strengthening women's participation across all professional areas.

The overarching goal is to ensure equal participation at every career level within the DRFZ. This includes increasing the proportion of women in leadership roles, achieving gender-balanced staffing based on qualifications, preventing gender-based disadvantages, and supporting a better balance between work and family life.

The GEP was comprehensively revised in April 2025 to align the DRFZ's strategic efforts with current legal standards, institutional developments, and societal challenges. It applies to all employees and leadership levels and serves as a binding framework for promoting equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion at the institute.

While the primary focus, according to legal mandates, is on equality between women and men, the DRFZ is equally committed to combating all forms of discrimination based on gender identity, origin, religion, physical or mental disability, and sexual orientation.

The GEP is available to all DRFZ employees via the intranet and to external stakeholders on the DRFZ website, in both German and English.

## 1.1. Scope

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) applies to all individuals who engage in professional activities or training at the DRFZ premises — even temporarily — under a contractual relationship with the DRFZ. The type and duration of the contract are not decisive.

This broad application reflects the DRFZ's administrative complexity and its close collaboration with Berlin universities such as the Technical University of Berlin, Humboldt University of Berlin, Free University of Berlin, and Charité – University Medicine Berlin through joint liaison groups. The GEP explicitly covers staff in these groups as well.

It also extends to alumni, visiting researchers, interns, and students completing Bachelor's or Master's theses at the DRFZ.

## 1.2. Legal Foundations

The primary legal foundation for gender equality at the DRFZ is Article 3, Paragraph 2 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany:

"Men and women shall have equal rights. The state shall promote the actual implementation of equality between women and men and take steps to eliminate existing disadvantages."  
— Basic Law, Art. 3 (2)

The GEP is additionally guided by the following frameworks:

- Federal Act on Gender Equality (BGleIG), most recent version 2023
- General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG), version 2024
- Recommendations of the Leibniz Association on Equal Opportunities (2024)
- Guidelines of the Joint Science Conference (GWK) on Diversity and Inclusion (2023)

Through this Plan, the DRFZ reaffirms its commitment to the objectives stated in §1 of the BGleIG:

"The purpose of this Act is to:

1. Implement equality between women and men,
  2. Eliminate existing disadvantages based on gender, particularly those affecting women, and prevent new disadvantages, and
  3. Improve family-friendliness and the compatibility of caregiving responsibilities and professional life for employees."
- BGleIG, §1

## 2. Inventory and Current State

### 2.1. Overview of Data

This section presents the professional representation of female employees at the DRFZ across all pay groups and position levels—covering both academic and science-supporting roles—as well as the employment security associated with these roles. The statistical data were updated as of December 2024. They include the gender distribution among academic and non-academic staff, the proportion of women in leadership positions, and the distribution of full-time and part-time employment arrangements.

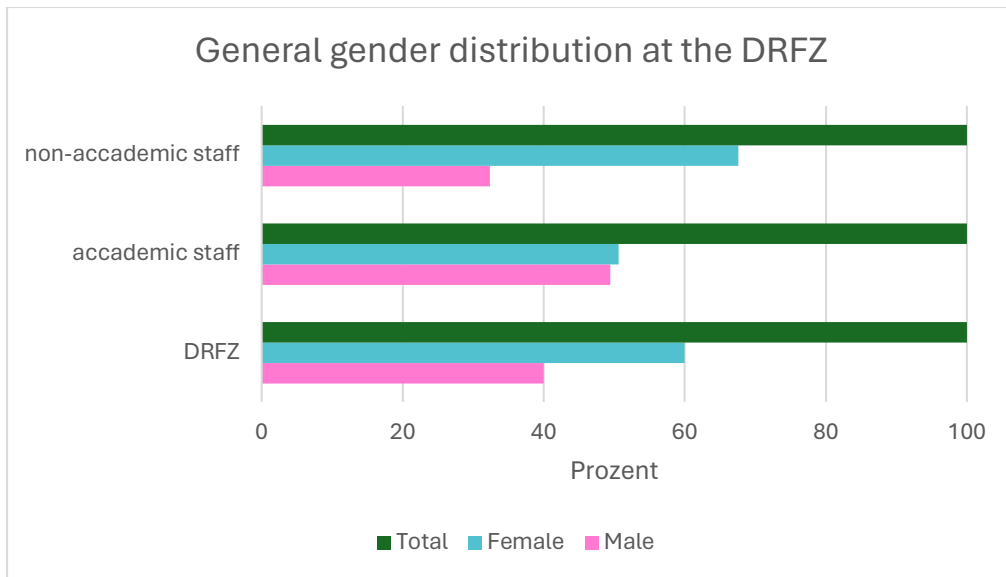


Figure 1 | Gender Distribution at the DRFZ (by Sector and Overall)

The analysis of gender distribution at the DRFZ reveals a high proportion of female employees in both the academic and science-supporting sectors.

To assess equal opportunity at the DRFZ, the following sections examine employment security as well as the participation of both genders across existing salary groups and professional roles.

### Models for Female Employees Working Time

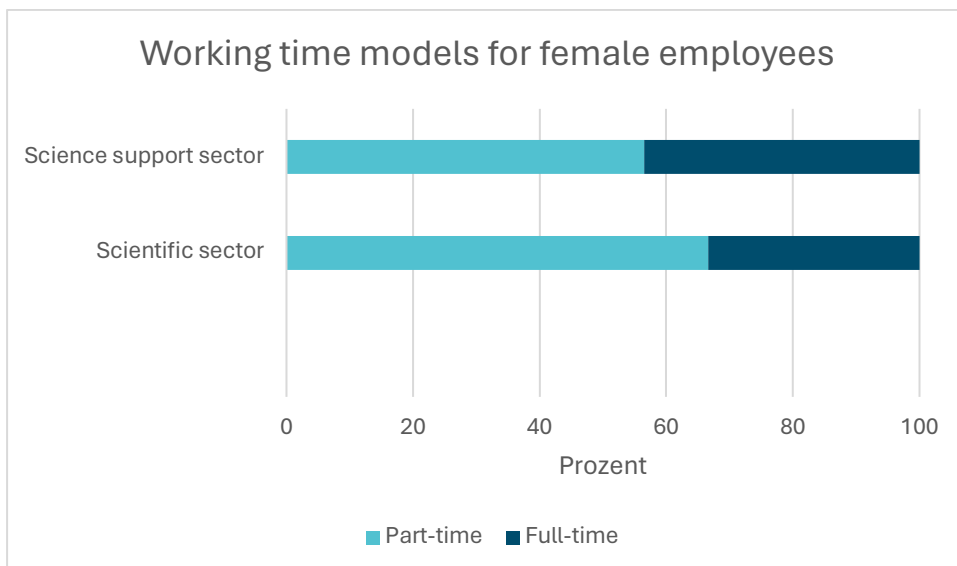


Figure 2 | Working Time Models by Sector for Female Employees at the DRFZ

The part-time working model supports employees in balancing their professional and private lives, including family responsibilities. A significant proportion of women at the

DRFZ utilize this model, with a noticeably higher rate among women in the scientific-support sector.

### Employment Contract Security

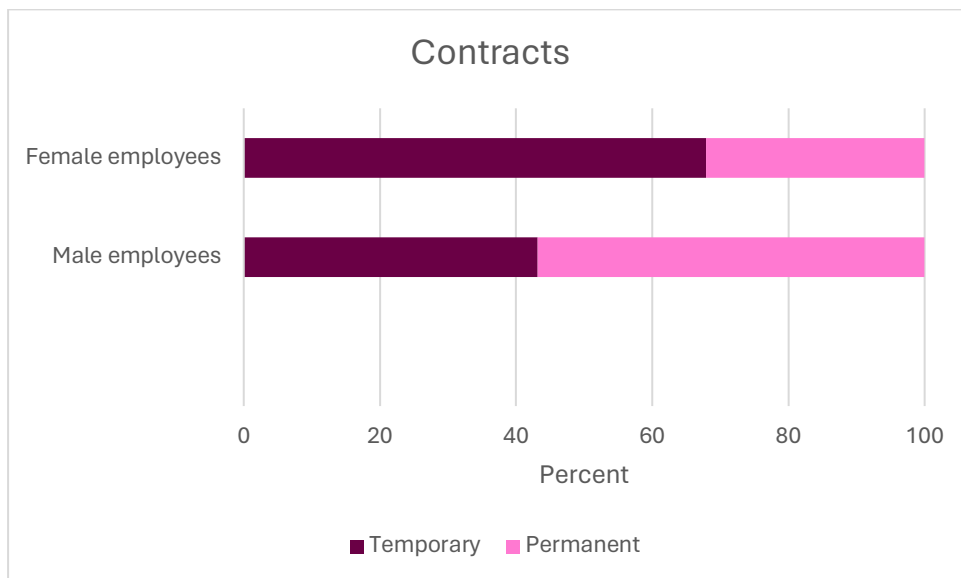


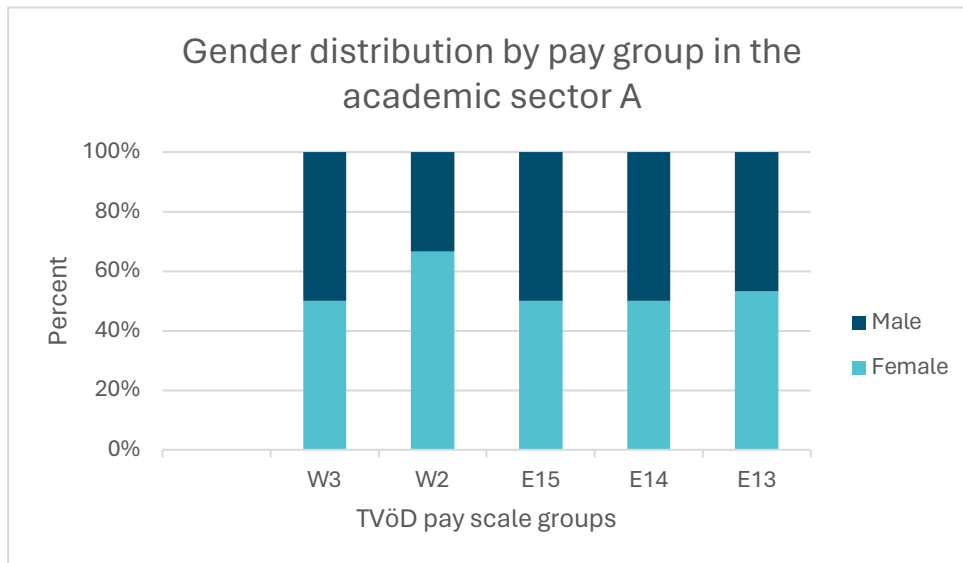
Figure 3 | Fixed-Term Employment Contracts for Scientists

An analysis of employment contracts by gender shows that a higher proportion of female scientists are employed on fixed-term contracts compared to their male counterparts. Given that the majority of DRFZ employees are women, the number of women on fixed-term contracts is significantly higher than that of men.

Fixed-term contracts represent a substantial factor of job insecurity, and this insecurity is unequally distributed. Contract security at the DRFZ is only partially within the institute's control, as a large proportion of positions are externally funded. Notably, 20% of women on fixed-term contracts are funded directly by the DRFZ. Therefore, the institute can primarily address this imbalance through indirect (passive) measures.

### Distribution of Employees Across Salary Groups in the Scientific Sector (A) and Scientific-Support Sector (B)

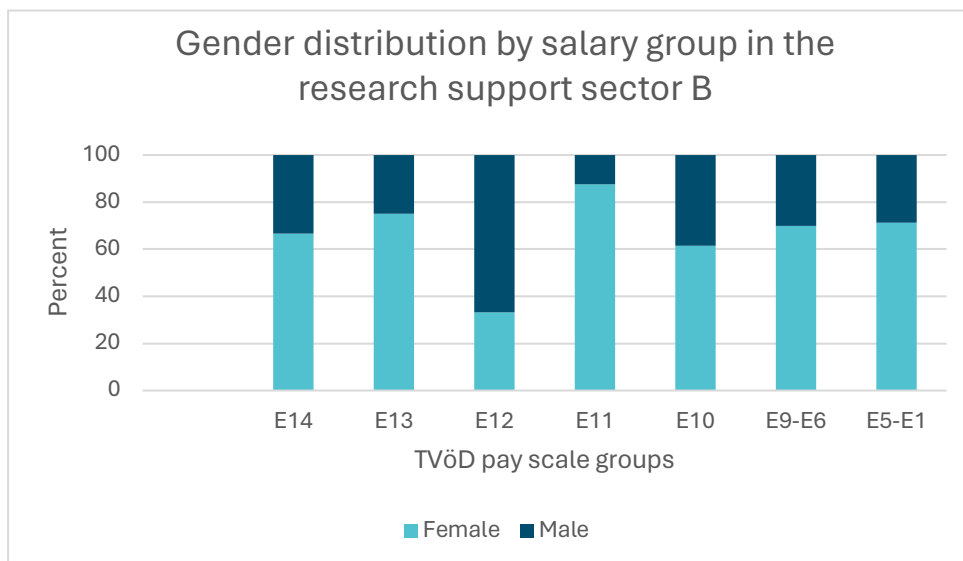
**A**



**Figure 4 | Gender Distribution by Salary Group in the Scientific Sector (according to TVöD Salary Groups)**

The breakdown of employees by salary group reflects the overall gender distribution at the DRFZ and highlights the strong participation of women across the scientific career spectrum.

**B**



**Figure 5 | Gender Distribution by Salary Group in the Scientific-Support Sector (according to TVöD Salary Groups)**

Similarly, in the scientific-support sector, there is a strong and equitable participation of women in the professional environment of the DRFZ.

## **Gender Distribution in Leadership Positions with Personnel Responsibility**

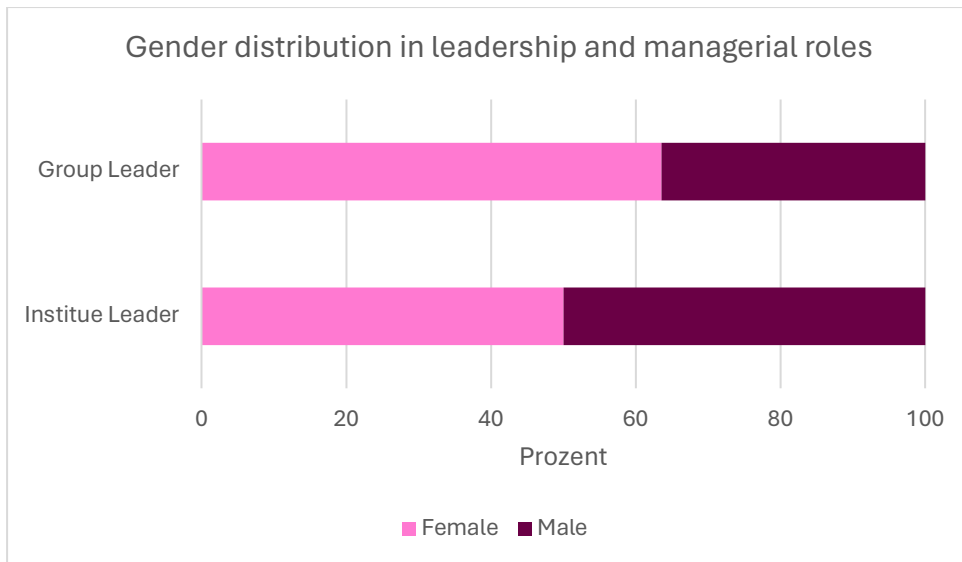


Figure 6 | Gender Distribution in Leadership Positions with Personnel Responsibility

At the DRFZ, the institute leadership is equally composed of men and women. Among group leaders at the DRFZ, there is also strong female representation. However, in the liaison groups associated with the DRFZ, the proportion of female leadership drops to about one-third.

Since liaison groups significantly shape the DRFZ's internal and external image, this imbalance reflects a broader, non-DRFZ-specific trend of reduced opportunities for women to attain leadership roles in scientific and clinical research institutes.

### Gender Distribution in Non-Leadership Scientific Positions

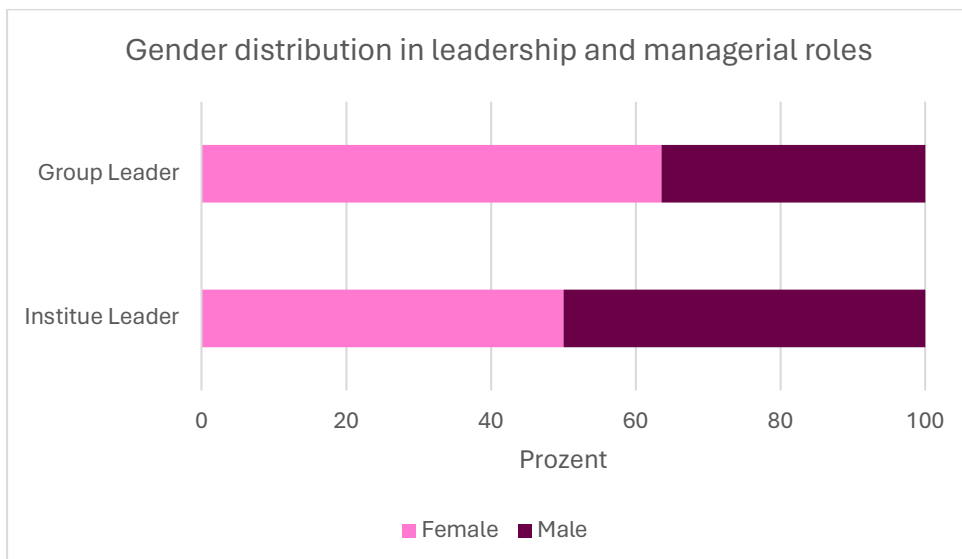


Figure 7 | Gender Distribution in Scientific Positions without Personnel Responsibility at the DRFZ



The DRFZ has also achieved a balanced gender distribution in scientific roles that do not involve leadership or personnel management responsibilities.

Overall, women participate equitably in the professional roles available at the DRFZ. The personnel data indicate no gender-based disadvantages regarding professional positions or career advancement opportunities.

However, fixed-term employment affects job security and the compatibility of career development with family life or external responsibilities. A larger share of female employees at the DRFZ holds fixed-term contracts, which means they regularly face the expiration of their employment agreements.

Additionally, particularly in the scientific sector, there is a lower proportion of women working part-time.

Job security and flexible working hours are crucial for women, who are often more involved in caregiving responsibilities. Thus, both limited contract security and limited working time flexibility — rooted partly in common research funding models — restrict equal opportunities for female employees.

These resulting disadvantages must be addressed and reduced through targeted, long-term measures.

## 2-2. Structural Implementation of Gender Equality

The DRFZ is a member of the Leibniz Association (Section C), which has enshrined the promotion of diversity and equal professional opportunities in its statutes. The Leibniz Association defines the legal framework for gender equality efforts through the *Administrative Agreement on Gender Equality* (AVGlei) in its current version from April 22, 2016, adopted by the Joint Science Conference (GWK) of the Federal and State Governments.

In addition, the Leibniz Association was the first non-university research organization to adopt the *Research-Oriented Standards for Gender Equality* developed by the DFG and supplemented these in 2016 with its own *Leibniz Gender Equality Standards* (Source: Leibniz Association website, section on Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality).

The DRFZ has not yet entered into an individual agreement with the Leibniz Association or the GWK under the AVGlei framework.

Between 2010 and 2016, the DRFZ was awarded the *Total E-Quality* certificate for gender equality multiple times (each award valid for three years). Since 2019, attempts to renew this certification have been unsuccessful, mainly due to the absence of an up-to-date Gender Equality Plan and the lack of binding legal agreements, such as an individual AVGlei agreement.

### 3. Objectives

The Gender Equality Plan aims to establish structures and conditions that create equal professional opportunities for all DRFZ employees and enable qualification-based participation across all positions and salary groups.

These principles must be particularly considered in new hires and appointments. Moreover, the plan seeks to identify and address structural or institutional factors that may hinder equal opportunities.

The following sections outline key areas of action and specific measures to promote gender equality at the DRFZ. These measures are not limited to leadership levels but aim to foster an inclusive, equitable, and gender-sensitive work environment overall.

#### **Specific objectives of the Gender Equality Plan include:**

- Active promotion of equal professional opportunities for women and men
- Advancement of job-relevant training and professional development for all employees
- Creation and support of an inclusive and integrative workplace culture
- Active promotion of the underrepresented gender, particularly in leadership roles
- Measures to improve the compatibility of work, family, and caregiving responsibilities
- Development and expansion of equality programs and supporting structures

### 4. Areas of Action and Measures

#### 4.1. Organizational Culture

The DRFZ is committed to a culture of constructive collaboration, based on transparent structures, fair processes, and actively promoted equal opportunities. This is complemented by an open and respectful communication culture that includes all employees.

The goal is to create a working environment that supports and promotes career advancement, individual development, and the balance of work, family, and caregiving responsibilities for all employees equally.

## 4.2. Raising Awareness Among Leadership

Group leaders and managers at the DRFZ, including those in liaison groups, are expected to maintain a strong and lasting commitment to equal opportunity and career development for their teams.

A key element of leadership responsibility is to support participation in training and development programs focused on building gender equality competencies. This includes, in particular, training sessions on unconscious gender biases and behavior patterns — available to all DRFZ employees.

The Gender Equality Plan also establishes a leadership guideline that outlines responsible management of power dynamics and dependency relationships. It includes a catalog of measures to prevent abuse of power and any form of discrimination.

Leaders at the DRFZ are expected to actively model inclusive and respectful behavior, visibly implement the measures outlined in the Gender Equality Plan, and foster a culture of equal opportunity through their daily practices.

## 4.3. Structures for Gender Equality – Appointment of Gender Equality Officers

In accordance with the Federal Act on Gender Equality (BGleiG), the DRFZ appoints a Gender Equality Officer and a Deputy Officer, elected by the female employees through a secret ballot.

The elected representatives are responsible for implementing and further developing gender equality efforts at the DRFZ.

Their tasks, duties, and rights include:

- Supporting the DRFZ in implementing the measures and guidelines defined in the Gender Equality Plan
- Promoting and monitoring legally and socially mandated equality measures
- Participating in recruitment and appointment procedures
- Participating in personnel decisions (e.g., terminations, warnings, training approvals) in accordance with §27 BGleiG
- Reviewing personnel files
- Maintaining confidentiality
- Reviewing and approving job advertisements
- Participating in conflict resolution meetings involving gender-specific issues, particularly where power imbalances exist
- Documenting and reporting incidents of sexual or gender-based discrimination
- Supporting affected employees in resolving such incidents, including reporting to the institute leadership and relevant authorities
- Advising and assisting female employees facing workplace challenges (e.g., conflicts with colleagues or supervisors, lack of training opportunities)

- Serving as a contact person for all female employees
- Communicating available support programs for women
- Actively participating in internal committees (e.g., group leader meetings, gender equality-focused sessions)
- Evaluating the Gender Equality Plan every two years and providing annual reports on gender equality issues
- Continuously updating their own knowledge through training in gender equality and anti-discrimination

## Framework and Funding

The role of the Gender Equality Officer is honorary and unpaid.

According to BGleiG, the DRFZ must provide financial resources to support equality measures and to enable participation in programs, professional development, and business travel whenever possible.

To implement specific initiatives — such as setting up family-friendly infrastructure (e.g., mobile childcare rooms or diaper changing facilities) — the Gender Equality Officer may also apply for additional funding.

For 2025, the DRFZ will allocate a Gender Equality Budget in the amount of 5,000 euros.

In addition to financial resources, the Federal Act on Gender Equality (BGleiG) also requires that the Gender Equality Officer and their Deputy be granted adequate time relief, depending on the actual workload.

The working hours spent on gender equality tasks must be documented and compensated either through time off in lieu or a contractual extension.

These structural measures are essential to ensure the reliable and effective implementation of gender equality initiatives by the appointed officers.

Furthermore, the Gender Equality Team must be provided with a suitable office space if needed — for example, to conduct confidential conversations or to review sensitive documents securely.

To support the substantive and practical implementation of gender equality and diversity at the DRFZ, the Gender Equality Officer is assisted by a Gender Equality Working Group.

This group is composed of representatives from various employment and liaison groups across the DRFZ and is open to participation by all interested individuals.

The Gender Equality Officer serves as a central point of contact for all DRFZ employees as well as members of liaison groups.

Therefore, the current Gender Equality Officer and their Deputy are prominently listed — including name, email address, and phone number — on the intranet, the external DRFZ website, and as part of the onboarding process for new employees.

## **Introduction and Contact Details of the Gender Equality Officer.**

**Dr. Laleh Khodadadi**

**E-mail: [Gleichstellung@drfz.de](mailto:Gleichstellung@drfz.de)**

**Tel: +49 (30) 28460736**

### **4.4. Integration of the Gender Dimension into Research and Teaching**

The DRFZ assumes responsibility not only for promoting internal equal opportunities but also for ensuring the adequate representation of all genders in its research approaches and academic content.

The institute actively supports gender-sensitive analyses and differentiated evaluation of gender-related data wherever scientifically relevant and methodologically feasible.

### **4.5. Use of Gender-Inclusive Language**

The DRFZ consistently uses gender-inclusive language, emphasizing its commitment to addressing people of all genders equally and ensuring the linguistic visibility of women in particular.

Inclusive language is understood as an expression of respect, equality, and visibility.

Gender-inclusive language is used in all DRFZ publications — such as on the website, in social media posts, press releases, announcements, and official reports — as well as in internal documents.

Whenever appropriate and feasible, documents are provided bilingually (German and English) to ensure equal participation of international employees.

#### **Measures to promote gender-inclusive language include:**

- In official communications, announcements, and documents, depending on context, either gender-neutral terms, the explicit mention of both genders (e.g., "female and male employees"), or gender-inclusive forms (e.g., "staff" or the use of the gender colon "Mitarbeiter:innen") are used — unless reference is made exclusively to one gender.
- Employees are encouraged to use inclusive language through an internal DRFZ guideline, which provides practical recommendations and examples for everyday communication.

### **4.6. Data Management and Reporting**

The DRFZ collects gender-disaggregated personnel data annually and presents these findings to the institute's leadership, for example during group leader meetings.

Special attention is given to identifying any imbalances across different occupational categories and leadership levels.

The Gender Equality Officer also reports on current developments, challenges, and progress in gender equality efforts.

The effectiveness of existing measures is regularly reviewed and adjusted as necessary.

**Measures include:**

- Annual collection of gender-specific employment data, aligned with the reporting requirements of the Leibniz Association.
- Publication of processed data when relevant (e.g., on the DRFZ website) and use in third-party funding applications, evaluations, or certification processes.
- Documentation of gender breakdown among applicants for all advertised positions, particularly for leadership and group leader roles in the scientific sector.
  - The HR department and appointment committees record this data anonymously in tabular form.

## 4.7. Equal Career Opportunities

This section outlines the principles and active measures implemented at the DRFZ in accordance with the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG):

"The purpose of this Act is to prevent or eliminate discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual identity."

— AGG, §1

The DRFZ is committed to the consistent application of these principles in everyday work life and all HR-related processes.

Discrimination — whether overt or structural — is not tolerated.

Instead, the DRFZ fosters a culture of appreciation, diversity, and fairness, ensuring that every individual, regardless of background, gender identity, belief system, or life circumstances, has equal access and opportunity.

The DRFZ's gender equality work aligns with legal requirements and develops additional measures tailored to the institute's specific needs and structures.

### 4.7.1. Preventing Sexual Harassment, Bullying, and Discrimination

The DRFZ strongly condemns all forms of sexual harassment, bullying, and discrimination, and takes active steps to prevent and respond to such incidents.

It is the institute's duty of care to protect all employees and DRFZ-affiliated individuals from psychological, physical, and sexualized violence in the workplace.

**Reporting Structures and Responsibilities:** Clear points of contact for reporting incidents are listed on both the DRFZ intranet and website.

The primary contacts are the Gender Equality Officer and the Ombudspersons, who jointly

develop low-threshold support structures for affected individuals. Their goal is to offer comprehensive counseling and support, and — if desired — assistance with initiating internal or external proceedings (e.g., legal complaints).

**Definition and Framework for Action:** An incident is considered critical, particularly when:

- A power imbalance exists between the parties involved,
- Inappropriate or demeaning communication occurs (e.g., ignoring, shouting, insults),
- Unwanted physical contact takes place.

In such cases, the regulations of the AGG (§1) apply, with a duty to document the incident and, if appropriate, report it — always maintaining confidentiality and in agreement with the affected person.

**Support and Training:** The DRFZ facilitates and funds access to training for responsible individuals in areas such as conflict management, anti-discrimination, and dealing with sexualized violence.

#### 4.7.2. Increasing the Visibility of Female Employees

As outlined in Section 1.1, the DRFZ maintains a largely gender-equitable staffing structure, which is actively reflected in internal communications and public relations activities. This includes the targeted representation of female employees in leadership roles, research projects, and interviews.

By doing so, the DRFZ assumes a leadership role in promoting diversity and gender equality in science and is committed to strengthening this commitment further in the future.

Special emphasis is placed not only on the visibility of women but also on the representation of other underrepresented groups — regarding origin, age, disability, or sexual identity.

Promoting visible diversity within the DRFZ significantly enhances employee identification with the institute and helps create an inclusive working environment.

##### 4.7.2.1. Visibility of Female Scientists

The DRFZ actively promotes the career development of female scientists and supports them in pursuing their individual career goals.

For example, group leaders are supported in their habilitation processes, participation in leadership development programs, and nominations for excellence databases and scientific awards.

Additionally, DRFZ female scientists regularly serve as speakers and chairs at seminar series and professional congresses.

**Key support measures for female scientists at the DRFZ include:**

- Aiming for at least 40% female speakers among keynote presenters at DRFZ conferences, internal seminars, and training courses — in line with EMBO conference



guidelines. Databases such as EMBO Women in Science, AcademiaNet, or EFIS Women in Immunology are actively used to identify qualified female speakers.

- Ensuring a balanced representation of women and men when assigning chair positions for sessions and discussion panels.
- Actively promoting and making visible the participation of women in discussions and Q&A sessions.
- Nominating DRFZ female scientists for inclusion in outstanding researcher databases (e.g., AcademiaNet).
- Actively considering DRFZ female scientists for award nominations and other competitive calls.
- Ensuring a balanced visual representation of female and male scientists in official DRFZ materials (e.g., website, brochures, presentations).
- Participating in science communication formats with a gender focus, such as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, Soapbox Science, and similar events.

#### 4.7.3. Support Opportunities for Female Scientists

Various foundations and institutions offer scholarships and funding programs specifically aimed at supporting early-career female scientists — both with and without caregiving responsibilities — in advancing their scientific careers.

The DRFZ actively encourages female scientists to participate in such programs and provides the necessary infrastructure for information and advisory services.

#### **Measures include:**

- An up-to-date overview of support programs for women is available on the Gender Equality Officer's intranet page, including:
  - UNESCO-L'Oréal Program / Gender Equality Fund
  - Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard Foundation
  - Rahel Hirsch Fellowship (Charité)
  - Caroline von Humboldt Scholarship (HU Berlin)
  - Gender Equality Fund (Berlin Institute of Health)
  - Mentoring programs of Charité and the Leibniz Association
- Regular targeted updates via email about new funding programs and calls.
- Promotion and linking of gender equality initiatives from the Leibniz Association and DFG (e.g., gender equality standards, funding lines) through the DRFZ intranet.
- Assistance from the Gender Equality Officer and relevant offices (e.g., Third Party Funding Office) in identifying and applying for grants, stipends, and allowances.

#### 4.7.4. Job Advertisements

All job advertisements at the DRFZ must receive formal approval from the Gender Equality Officers.

They ensure compliance with principles of equal opportunity and gender-inclusive language.



Departments are required to submit job postings to the Gender Equality Officer at least five working days before publication, recognizing that this role is honorary and supplementary to regular duties.

To maintain quality standards, templates and wording aids are provided to ensure non-discriminatory, inclusive language and actively promote applications from diverse groups.

#### 4.7.5. Active Recruitment Strategy

The DRFZ pursues an active recruitment strategy, particularly when filling senior scientific positions, to promote diversity and equal opportunity. Qualified women are actively approached internationally and encouraged to apply.

The DRFZ aims to invite at least two female candidates — ideally 50% of interviewees — to interviews for leadership positions, provided there are sufficient qualified applicants.

This active recruitment strategy applies across all professional groups and contributes to developing the DRFZ into a diverse, international, and inclusive workplace.

#### 4.7.6. Appointment Procedures and Committees

The DRFZ regularly participates in joint appointment procedures with Berlin universities and Charité – University Medicine Berlin.

While partner institutions are primarily responsible for compliance with gender equality standards, the DRFZ actively advocates for maintaining equal opportunity principles during selection processes.

Appointment committees involving the DRFZ should aim for gender balance, with a minimum of two voting female members on each committee.

This commitment highlights the DRFZ's dedication to transparent, fair, and gender-equitable appointment processes and to sustainably increasing the proportion of women in leadership roles.

#### 4.7.7. Hiring Procedures Below Leadership Level

For hiring and interviews for positions below the leadership level, where no formal appointment procedure is required, the DRFZ ensures a neutral, transparent, and discrimination-free selection process.

If it is not possible to form a diverse recruitment team internally, the Gender Equality Officer can be involved to support an equitable procedure.

This helps maintain high quality standards in recruitment and strengthens diversity within the DRFZ workforce.

#### 4.7.8. Staff Development and Career Advancement

Through its membership in the Leibniz Association and collaborations with scientific societies such as DGRh, DGfI, DGfZ, ISAC, EULAR, and EFIS, the DRFZ offers numerous professional training, continuing education, and mentoring opportunities.

Participation is actively supported, including:

- The Leibniz Association's Postdoc Mentoring Program, preparing early-career researchers for leadership roles.
- Leadership skills, career development, and equality training offered internally, through Leibniz initiatives, or external providers.

Implementation and participation in these measures are documented and evaluated annually as part of the Gender Equality Plan report.

#### 4.7.9. Work-Family Balance

Balancing a scientific career and family responsibilities remains a significant challenge, particularly for young researchers. Common structural barriers include:

- Absences due to maternity leave or parental leave
- Disadvantages from family-friendly working models
- Bias in application procedures due to family responsibilities
- Delays in achieving key career milestones

The DRFZ recognizes these challenges and works to create family-friendly conditions to enable equal career opportunities for all staff with caregiving duties.

#### 4.7.10. Flexible Working Models

This section outlines the DRFZ's approach in accordance with §§15–18 of the Federal Act on Gender Equality (BGleIG).

The DRFZ supports mobile working for roles that can be performed digitally and provides online access to seminars, lectures, and mandatory training where feasible.

Temporary shifts from full-time to part-time work to accommodate caregiving responsibilities are encouraged and handled under the Part-Time and Fixed-Term Employment Act (TzBfG) and the BGleIG.

Rejected requests must be justified in writing according to BGleiG §16.

When advertising new positions, part-time options must be considered and offered if feasible.

Parents with school-age children receive priority for vacation approval during official school holidays or flexible mobile working arrangements.

#### 4.7.11. Support for Temporary Replacement Positions and Contract Durations

Employees managing scientific projects critical to their career progression during maternity or parental leave are supported by the DRFZ and group leaders in finding temporary personnel solutions.

The DRFZ also explores possibilities for extending contracts independently of third-party funding to actively prevent structural disadvantages for employees with family responsibilities.

#### 4.7.12. Childcare

The DRFZ provides two kindergarten spots, allocated through a transparent process based on current employment contracts and actual childcare needs.

A mobile childcare room is available for parents during emergencies, located centrally for easy access without prior registration.

Additionally, diaper-changing facilities are installed at the DRFZ and the neighboring Max Planck Institute.

For employees attending training or conferences, the DRFZ can subsidize short-term external childcare up to €150 per day, subject to available funding and an application process.

#### 4.7.13. Family-Friendly Scheduling

The DRFZ schedules scientific events, where possible, during core childcare hours (9:00 AM to 3:00 PM) and offers digital participation options to improve accessibility.

Internal events may pause during summer school holidays to accommodate parents.

#### 4.7.14. Work and Caregiving Responsibilities

Recognizing that women disproportionately bear caregiving responsibilities, the DRFZ ensures that employees caring for ill or elderly relatives have access to flexible working models and support for project continuity.

Family caregiving is explicitly recognized as part of the DRFZ's commitment to work-life balance, equality, and inclusion.

## 5. Continuous Development and Adaptation of the Gender Equality Plan

The measures and principles outlined in this Gender Equality Plan are evaluated every two years, either through internal reviews or anonymous staff surveys, to ensure continuous improvement and adaptation to employee needs.

Updates and evaluation results are documented annually between December 1 and January 31 and communicated via updates to the plan and reports to DRFZ leadership.

Implementation progress and new initiatives, such as the introduction of the mobile childcare room, are communicated transparently through group leader meetings, staff assemblies, or digital newsletters.

The DRFZ Board of Trustees is regularly informed about the status, adjustments, and strategic goals related to gender equality.