

ROYAL BELGIAN INSTITUTE OF NATURAL SCIENCES
GENDER EQUALITY PLAN



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION** **2**
- ACTION PLAN** **3**
- 1. Dissemination and commitment 3
- 2. Implementing dedicated structures 3
- 3. Collecting data and tracking 3
- 4. Awareness and training activities 4
- 5. Work-life balance 5
- 6. Gender balance in leadership positions 5
- 7. Gender equality in recruitment, career development and contract employees 5
- 8. Measures to prevent gender-based harassment 6

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the provisions of the Law of 12 JANUARY 2007 aimed at monitoring the implementation of the resolutions of the World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995 and integrating the gender dimension into all policies (commonly known as the "Gender Mainstreaming Law"), and the legal commitments¹ and provisions of the European Commission's Horizon Europe Programme, the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS), the nine other Federal Scientific Institutes (FSIs) and BELSPO², which fall under the Federal Science Policy, recognise the need for a Gender Equality Plan (GEP).

This Plan (Gender Equality Plan) is based on the GEP created by BELSPO and is specific to the RBINS organisations and needs. It was approved by the RBINS Board of Directors on 21/12/2021, which recognises the need for targeted actions concerning the gender issue. The RBINS is committed to continuing its implementation as described in this document.

The Gender Equality Plan follows the framework established by the European Commission and develops the four mandatory requirements ([building blocks](#)) for a Gender Equality Plan, as well as four recommended themed areas. It builds on the work started in the previous legislature by the Gender Mainstreaming network consisting of BELSPO and the ten FSIs.

¹ The GEP falls within the framework of the legal provisions for fighting discrimination between women and men. It is in line with the political commitments, as stated:

- in the [Gender Mainstreaming Law](#) of 12 January 2007 and the Royal Decree of 26 January 2010 taken in application of the law,
- in the [Federal Gender Mainstreaming Plan](#) adopted by the Council of Ministers on 11 June 2021
- in the [2019 federal government agreement](#),
- in the [2 November 2020 policy statement](#) of the State Secretary for Scientific Policy, Thomas Dermine (Chamber, Doc 55 1610/016).
- in the [2016-2018 SPP Scientific Policy Administration Contract](#) ([the 2021-2024 Administration Contract](#) is currently being drafted)

² BELSPO - The Federal Science Policy is entrusted by the government with the preparation, execution and evaluation of science policy to support the competencies of the Federal Authority. https://www.belspo.be/belspo/index_en.stm

ACTION PLAN

This is a general action plan, to be further refined yearly according to the [strategic plan](#) developed within RBINS management cycle.

1. Dissemination and commitment

The Gender Equality Plan is public.

It is available at the following address:
naturalsciences.be/en/about-us/home

This space, dedicated to the Gender Equality Plan and gender issues on the "About Us" page of the RBINS, was set up in collaboration between the Communication Department, the Human Resources Department (HR) and the Research Office (ResO) of the Institute.

Action 1.1.

Regularly update the page dedicated to the Gender Equality Plan on the RBINS website and the information and new initiatives related to the theme of gender.

Action 1.2.

To ensure its dissemination within the Institute, the GEP will be distributed by internal e-mail to all RBINS personnel, followed by an explanatory presentation of the Plan. Each new step in the implementation of the Plan will be disseminated and communicated to staff members.

2. Implementing dedicated structures

The RBINS has appointed a contact person in the HR department who is responsible for monitoring the GEP and implementing its actions within the Institute. This staff member is in charge of communication related to the Gender Equality Plan and represents the RBINS in the BELSPO-FSI network on Gender Mainstreaming (GM). The contact person will ensure exchanges between the RBINS and the GM network, which will coordinate the actions and follow-up of the GEPs at the federal level.

The contact person appointed by the RBINS is: Ms A. Verbeeren
(HR@naturalsciences.be)

Action 2.1.

Monitor the Gender Equality Plan and its actions within the RBINS, including interactions with the GM and harassment contact persons (see item 8).

Action 2.2.

Guarantee the representation of the RBINS within the BELSPO - FSI GM network.

3. Collecting data and tracking

The RBINS HR department has data on its personnel broken down by gender (see BELSPO P&O). In addition to the breakdown of statistics by gender, and to get an idea of the respective situation of women and men in a specific area, 'gender statistics', i.e. data disaggregated by gender that has been analysed

to highlight the biases or differences that exist between men and women in a particular area, will be produced.

As a federal administration, the RBINS is required to apply language laws first and foremost in its human resources management

policy (as they are "public policy"). However, particular attention will be paid to the allocation of the positions to be filled, so that this takes place in respect of gender equality.

4. Awareness and training activities

Implementing measures to raise awareness of gender issues among the Institute's staff and visitors is essential to understanding and correcting discrimination, stereotypes and other prejudices that may plague the work environment.

The RBINS has created a friendly meeting and resting space where all staff members can discuss and learn about gender-related events and activities.

The non-profit organisation Belgian Women in Science (bewise.be) based at the RBINS develops projects to promote gender equality in science. A 'GEP task force' has been set up and the BeWiSe member of the RBINS takes part. Training sessions, workshops and events related to the mentoring programme are held regularly, notably at the RBINS, for Belgian research institutions. The BeWiSe contact person at the Institute will ensure that the information is disseminated to the Institute's staff, in collaboration with the HR department, so they can benefit from the training. The RBINS, with its experience in

Action 3.1.

Establish the gender parameters to be monitored, collect gender-disaggregated staff data and analyse it taking account of the GDPR.

Action 3.2

Identify the imbalances according to the analyses carried out (3.1), determine their origin and suggest ways to correct them. Establish conclusions and propose avenues of action in collaboration and agreement with the Gender Mainstreaming network of the Federal Science Policy. To this end, it is proposed that meetings are held annually with gender experts.

Action 3.3.

Disseminate the findings of the RBINS staff gender data analyses annually and incorporate them into the RBINS annual report.

organising and hosting events on the theme of gender equality (Researcher's Night/Wisenight (2021), Mind the gap (International Women's Day) (2018), training, focused lunches, mentoring programme, etc.) will continue these initiatives and efforts within the framework of the Gender Equality Plan.

Action 4.1.

Organise regular events, either general or targeting certain categories of personnel or themes, to reinforce a decompartmentalised vision free of clichés and stereotypes.

Action 4.2.

Offer training to staff (including decision-making positions) on the discrimination prevention, gender equality, equal opportunities, and diversity.

5. Work-life balance

Data on part-time work, parental leave, teleworking and, more generally, working time arrangements, is managed by the RBINS HR department.

As an FSI, the RBINS is required to comply with the legal framework. (This legal basis constitutes the framework of RBINS action in organising the working time of its personnel). The RBINS will ensure the application of Art. 1 of the Law of July 22, 1993 "concerning certain measures with regard to public service", which establishes the "right to disconnect", and the Circular of 20 December 2021, which specifies its application.

This legal framework applies the principle of equality always and everywhere and any employee, regardless of gender, can use it. The RBINS is committed to disseminating this information to its staff. A balance will always be sought between the staff's private life and work time.

6. Gender balance in leadership positions

The RBINS should reflect on the imbalances observed in leadership positions (cf. 3.1), and in the composition of committee members; gender balance remains a concern and is given particular attention.

Action 5.1.

Publish the above data to RBINS staff annually, in compliance with the GDPR.

Action 5.2.

Identify imbalances, seek their origin and suggest ways to correct them.

Action 5.3.

Disseminate the webinars and tools developed by the EURAXESS portal (euraxess.ec.europa.eu) to RBINS researchers.

7. Gender equality in recruitment³, career development and contract employees

As with the previous two points, the RBINS, as a federal scientific institution, is bound by a legal framework.

For the recruitment of administrative and technical staff, the RBINS is required to go

Action 6.1.

Identify the imbalances between men and women in leadership positions, examine their origins and suggest ways to correct them. The results of this analysis will be forwarded to the relevant supervisory authority (BELSPO, SELOR, etc.) so that it can make the necessary changes.

through SELOR⁴, whose procedures respect the language laws, but also include and apply a [gender policy](#). This policy is available on its website.

The RBINS is requested to ensure gender

³ The term "recruitment" corresponds to entry into service in the statutory framework

⁴ <https://www.selor.be/fr/>: Selection office of the Belgian federal administration.

balance among the members of scientific juries during the selection process to recruit new scientific staff members. To this end, the use of existing databases, such as the Expertalia database, can help to create a more balanced gender representation on juries.

Action 7.1.

Encourage a gender-balanced composition of the members of scientific juries by providing a motivation for the composition of the jury in the selection report.

8. Measures to prevent gender-based harassment

All federal administrations and institutions are required to comply with the legal framework aimed at combating harassment (as defined by the [Welfare Act](#)⁵) in all its forms, regardless of the victim or perpetrator. The RBINS, like the other FSIs, has appointed trusted individuals for this purpose. They are trained and are required to undergo a mandatory annual "refresher course" in collaboration with EMPREVA⁶.

Action 8.1.

Conduct an awareness campaign, placing posters containing essential information in high-traffic areas to maintain awareness.

Action 8.2.

Take advantage of specialised or specific opportunities and initiatives (e.g. International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to raise staff awareness of this theme (initiated by the GM Network).

Action 8.3.

Communicate essential information about harassment in all its forms via e-mail and intranet announcements to maintain awareness.

⁵ This point is also included [in the work regulations and more specifically in the 'Violence, and moral and sexual harassment' regulations of the RBINS](#).

⁶ Trusted persons, training, and refresher courses are evaluated (via the Prevention Advisor) by [EMPREVA](#). EMPREVA is the central unit of the joint internal service for prevention and protection at work of the Belgian Federal Public Administration.

EMPREVA's actions go beyond harassment and take into account the well-being of the worker as a whole. All the work carried out in the area of psycho-social risks (including harassment) is subject to a double reporting, firstly by the Internal Service for Prevention and Protection at Work and secondly by the External Service for Prevention and Protection. These annual reports are made public and are available. They contain general statistics on the cases handled by the trusted persons.

In addition to EMPREVA, which is a preferred partner, the participation of field associations specialised in this theme can be used to organise events or to orchestrate a prevention campaign.

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