

BSRC FLEMING

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN (GEP)

2022-2024



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1 Introduction

Biomedical Sciences Research Center (BSRC) FLEMING is a non-profit organization operating under the auspices of the Greek General Secretariat for Research & Innovation and supported by the Greek government and by national, European and international grants.

FLEMING focuses on scientific and technological excellence, innovation and training in biomedical sciences. FLEMING has gained international recognition for its pioneering research towards understanding the molecular and cellular basis of human diseases, such as autoimmune disorders, cancer, neurodegenerative conditions, osteoporosis, pulmonary fibrosis and others, and the development of new approaches for their diagnosis and treatment. The Center has achieved top performance indicators of academic and research excellence.

FLEMING currently consists of two Institutes: The Institute for Fundamental Biomedical Research (IFBR) and the Institute for Bioinnovation (IBI). FLEMING researchers participate in horizontal Research Programs across the two institutes, in the areas of Immunity & Inflammation, Neuroscience, Cancer Biology, RNA Biology & Epigenetics and Bioinformatics & Computational Biology. Each Institute has a Scientific Advisory Board, elected by the institute's researchers and advising the Director on all scientific issues (e.g. recruitment, evaluation, etc.)

FLEMING's ultimate decision-making body is its Board of Directors, chaired by the Chairman of the Board and Acting Director of the Center. According to Greek Law, FLEMING's Board consists of a representative of the FLEMING Foundation, the Directors of the Institutes, an elected representative of the research personnel, an elected representative of other personnel and a representative assigned by the Ministry of Development and Investments.

The Gender Equality Plan presented in the current document is approved by the Administrative Board of the Center and monitored by the Gender Equality Committee (GEC), established during the 257th Administrative Board Meeting (29/10/2021). The actions implemented under the GEP complement a number of FLEMING policies and plans, which are detailed below. In line with Horizon Europe's gender equality policy, FLEMING's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) has been developed after a thorough internal audit and will be renewed every three years.

FLEMING recruits talented investigators capable of leading independent, internationally competitive research teams, as well as a wide range of technical and administrative support staff, fully complying with the European Commission policies that refer to the development of human resources. FLEMING practices transparent and fair processes for all personnel recruitment. This ensures equal treatment of all applicants based solely on merit, academic qualifications and expertise in specific areas, as required. Open Calls for recruitment are widely advertised both locally ([FLEMING website](#), Greek Press, LinkedIn, etc.) and internationally (Euraxess), often asking a large network of colleagues for their assistance in identifying suitable candidates. Our calls clearly outline the selection process, evaluation criteria and the process for redress of grievances. In this way, FLEMING is in full compliance with the general principles and requirements of the [Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers](#) of the European Commission, concurrently respecting national legislation for open recruitment procedures for all staff. An Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee has been appointed by the Board of Directors to advise on ethical issues regarding research practices and sample treatment (bioethics) and conduct among colleagues (ethics) that arise when carrying out research work in the Center, as well as to provide recommendations on the ethical considerations in the context of the programs proposed and implemented at FLEMING. All relevant documents are uploaded on the Center's Intranet and are available to all FLEMING staff.

FLEMING follows a person-centered HR policy in order to meet, in the best possible way, the needs and expectations of the researchers and other staff, and provides access to a wide range of information and

support services in legal, administrative and practical issues. FLEMING strives to implement the principles of equal opportunity and treatment for all employees, irrespective of gender, origin, race, or physical limitations. Indicative respective data are presented below:

- 65% of all FLEMING personnel are female
- 50% of all FLEMING researchers are female

FLEMING ensures that the working conditions for all staff provide the flexibility deemed essential for successful research performance in accordance with existing national legislation. We aim to provide working conditions which allow both women and men to balance personal and work life, family and career.

2 Development of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

In collaboration with other Greek Research Institutes, FLEMING has prepared this **Gender Equality Plan (GEP)**, adopting the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2024, which covers all EU policies, including Research and Innovation policy. The implementation of this strategy will follow a two-pronged approach: taking targeted measures to achieve gender equality, combined with stronger gender mainstreaming. The FLEMING GEP has been developed after a thorough internal audit, and is considered not only as a prerequisite for Horizon projects, but also as a self-assessment opportunity.

2.1 Regulatory framework

The Greek Constitution guarantees gender equality in the following articles:

Article 4(2): 'Greek men and women have equal rights and obligations'

Article 22(1)(b): 'All workers, irrespective of sex or other distinctions, have the right to equal payment for work of equal value'

Article 116(2): 'Positive measures aiming at promoting equality between men and women do not constitute discrimination on grounds of sex. The State shall take measures to eliminate inequalities existing in practice, in particular those detrimental to women'

The above principles are reflected in national legislation, which also implements, in many cases, relevant European Directives. Indicatively:

L. 4808/2021 (GG A 101/19.6.2021), 'Protection of Labor - Establishment of the Independent Authority "Labor Inspectorate"- Ratification of International Labor Organization Convention 190 on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the world of work - Ratification of International Labor Organization Convention 187 on the Framework for the Promotion of Safety and Health at Work- Implementation of Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the balance between work and private life, other provisions of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and other urgent arrangements',

L. 4604/2019 (GG A 50/2019), 'Promotion of substantive gender equality',

L. 4443/2016, (GG A 232/9.12.2016) "Transposition of, a) Directive 2000/43/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, b) Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and c) Directive 2014/54/EU on measures facilitating the exercise of rights conferred on workers in the context of freedom of movement for workers etc.

L. 4097/2012 (GG A 235/3.12.2012), 'Implementation of the Principle of Equal Treatment of Men and Women Engaged in an Activity in a Self-Employed Capacity – Implementation of Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and the Council',

L. 4531/2018 (GG A 62/5.4.2018) ratifying the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence of the Council of Europe (IC), signed by Greece on May 2011.

L. 4491/2017 (GG A 152/13.10.2017), 'Legal recognition of gender identity... etc.',

L. 927/1979, (GG A 139/28.6.1979), implementing the CERD, as amended by L. 4285/2014, (GG A 191/10.9.2014) and L. 4491/2017, (GG A 152/13.10.2017).

2.2 Methodology

For the development of the GEP, many factors and procedures had to be defined and taken into consideration, adjusted to the current small size of our center. These have been applied in distinct development phases, i.e. **(a) Audit, (b) Planning, and (c) Implementation.**

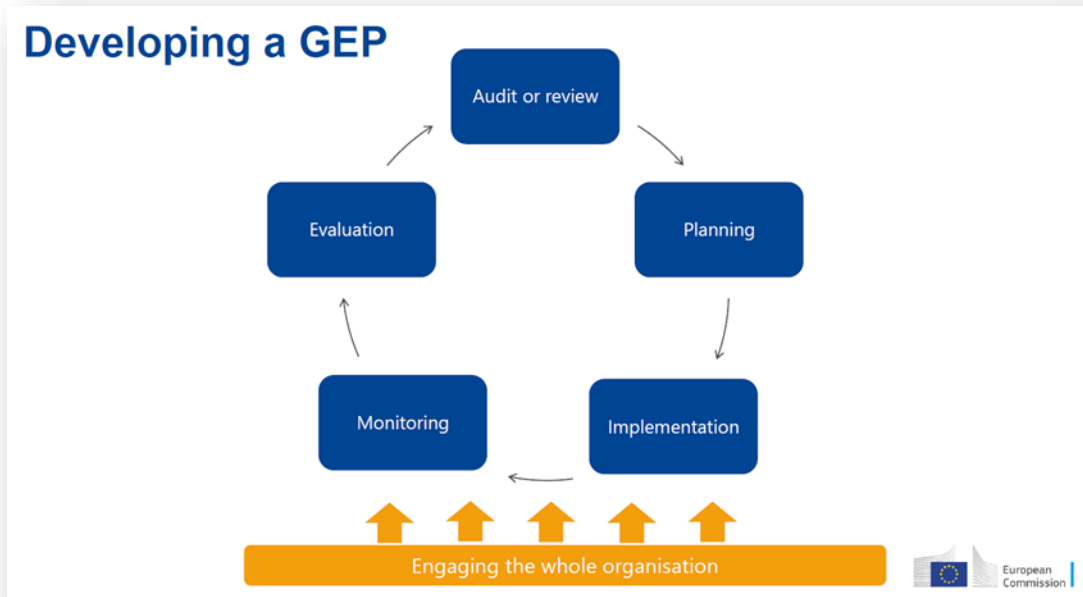


Figure 1 : Developing a GEP (Source: European Commission)

- A. Audit phase:** This included the collection of gender-disaggregated data, from 2017 to 2021 and a review of practices to identify possible gender inequalities and related causes. The audit phase included review of relevant national and regional laws, regulations, or funding requirements. As a first step in this phase, the FLEMING Administrative Board established the Gender Equality Committee (GEC) on October 2021 consisting of 4 members:
- Dr. Antigone Dimas, Researcher C', Institute for Bioinnovation, FLEMING
 - Dr. Mihalis Verykokakis, Researcher C', Institute for Fundamental Biomedical Research, FLEMING
 - Ms. Mata Hatzipetrou, Legal Counsel, FLEMING
 - Ms. Georgia Diakogianni, President's Office Manager, FLEMING
- B. Planning phase:** During this phase, the Gender Equality Committee set targets for the GEP, while mapping potential actions and measures. This phase also included allocation of responsibilities to GEC members for prompt GEP delivery.
- C. Implementation phase:** A roadmap of activities is being carried out including setting up working groups to develop and implement new policies and procedures. This phase includes awareness-raising and training efforts to achieve broad engagement regarding the GEP within FLEMING and to the public

2.3 Audit phase-current status assessment

During the audit phase, the GEC members, in cooperation with the FLEMING’s HR department, have collected the necessary data to depict gender-disaggregated statistics for FLEMING employees, during the period 2017-2021. No employees to date have declared their gender as non-binary.

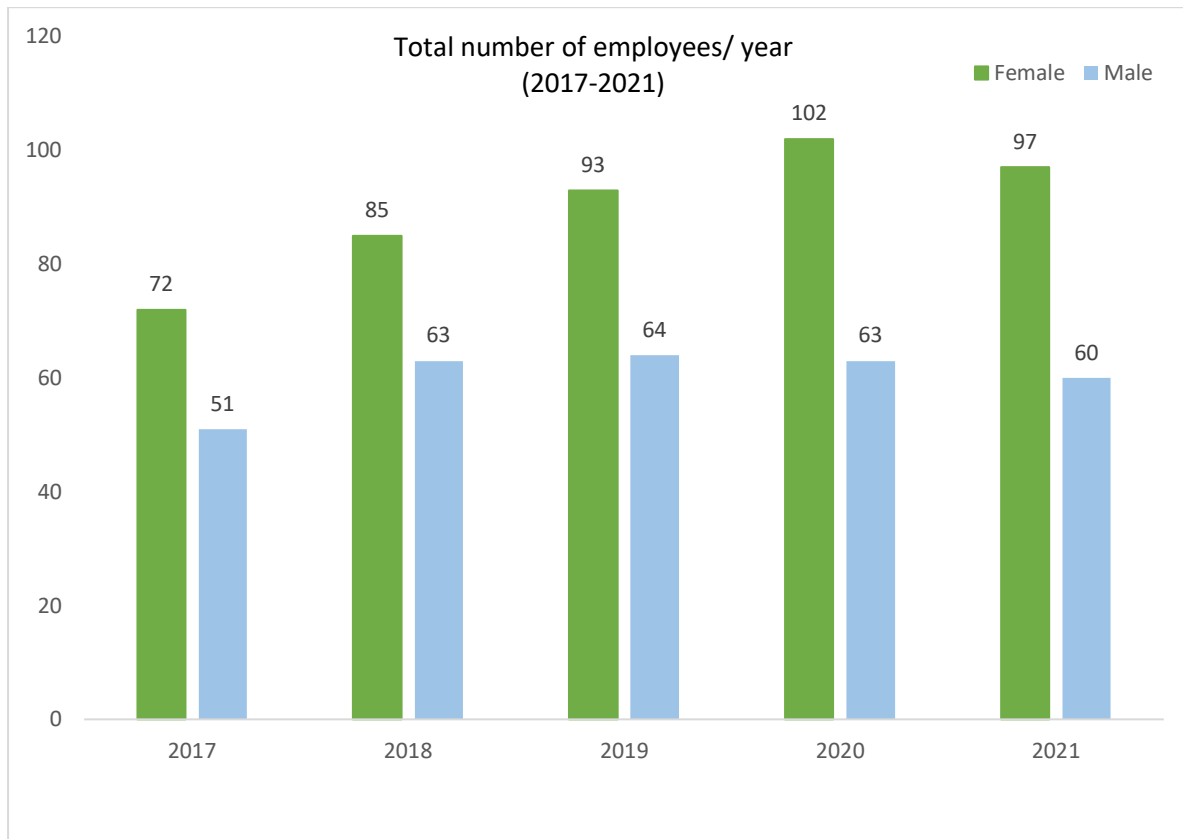


Figure 2: Numbers of female and male employees

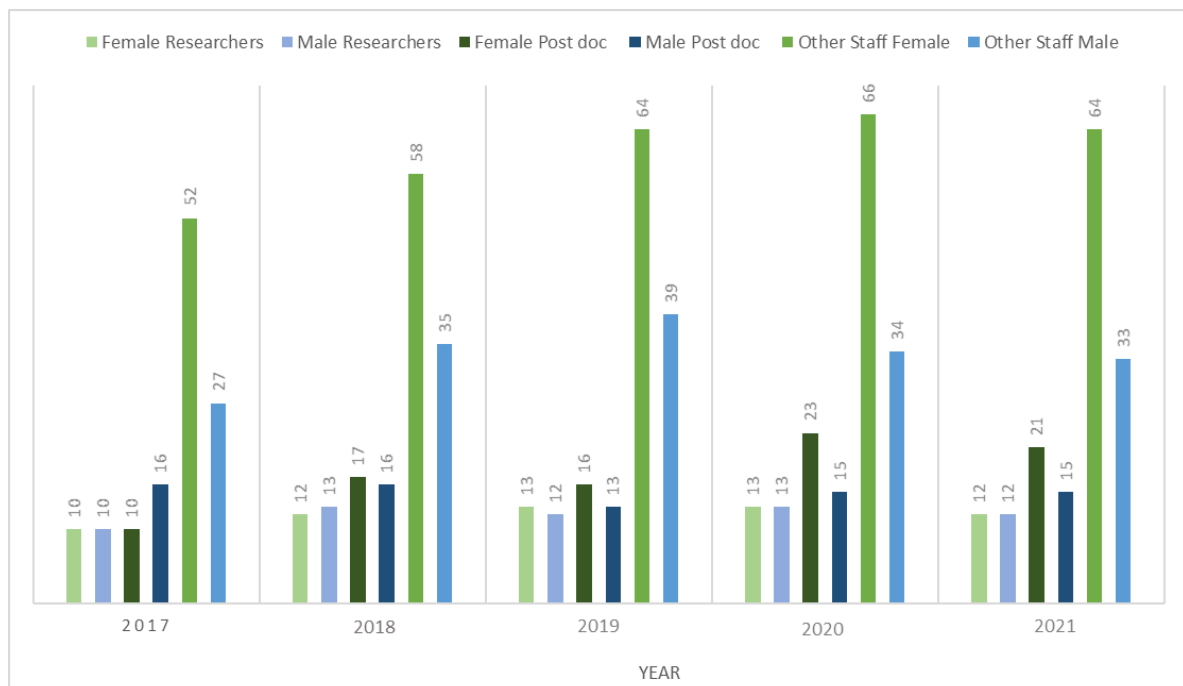


Figure 3: Numbers of female and male employees per stated category (Other staff includes administrative staff, driver, cleaning staff, guards, electricians, building maintenance, Animal House maintenance)

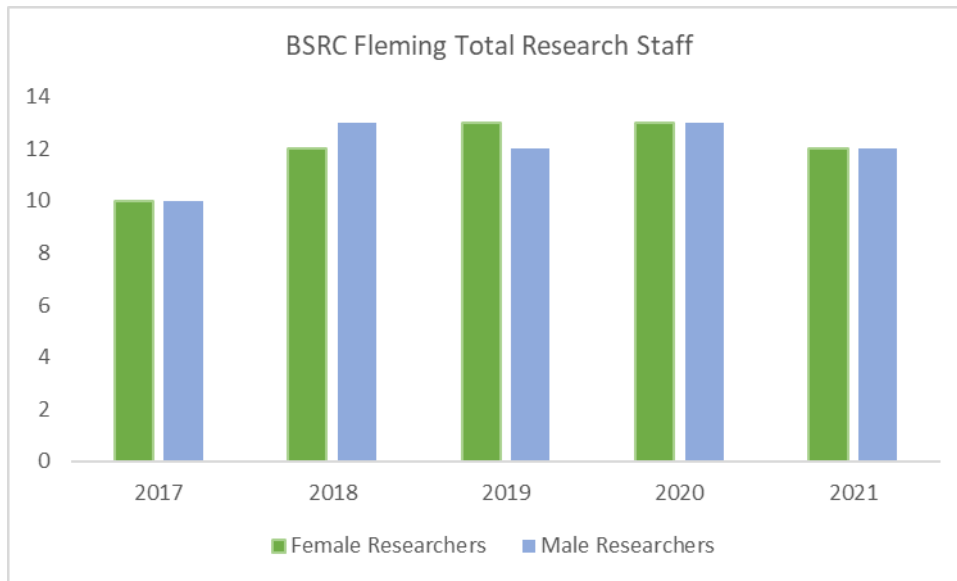


Figure 4: Numbers of female and male researchers (group-leaders and staff scientists)

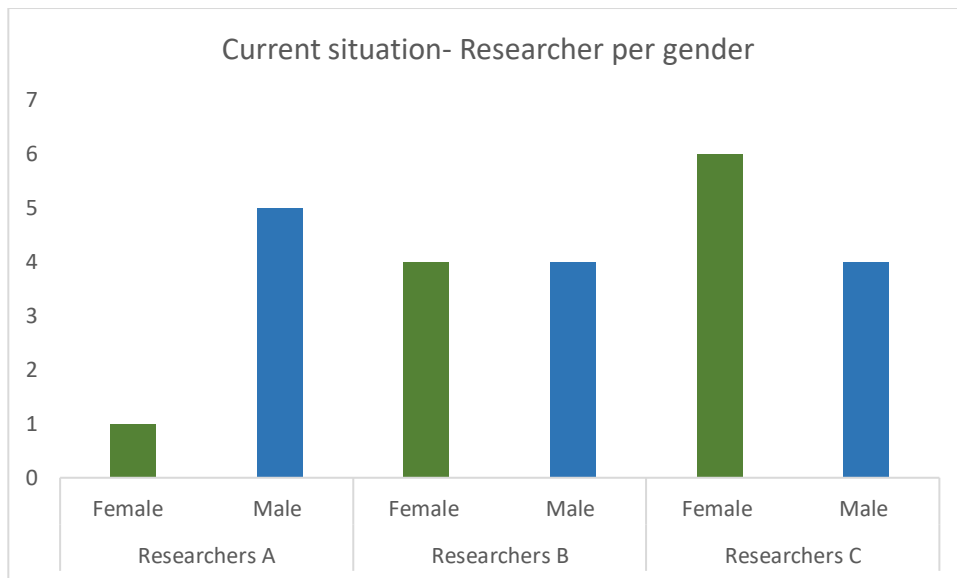


Figure 5: Current situation- Numbers of female and male researchers (group-leaders and staff scientists)

2.4 Initiative

FLEMING is a founding member of the Greek Innovation Lab for Women (The Innovation Center for Women; #GIL4W), an initiative led by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, founded in June 2021. It aims at the design of innovative actions that will enhance the attraction of more women to participate in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and will increase women participation in research, innovation and entrepreneurship. GIL4W will create a platform for the development of entrepreneurship that will be based on advanced technology, creating the conditions for equal participation in the new environment formed by the continuous development of technology and giving special emphasis to female talent. It also aims to assess the impact of gender-based policies.

3 Key priority areas and objectives

Based on the data shown above, FLEMING has set as a key priority further minimize gender bias in some areas that gender mainstreaming lacks balance. The main priorities that FLEMING has already adopted towards this direction are summarized as follows:

- Focus on advancement & excellence regardless of gender.
- Promote work-life balance for all employees.
- Redefine outdated human resources policies.
- Close the leadership gap by encouraging women to pursue decision-making positions.
- Re-evaluate common biases and create an open-minded environment.
- Provide mentorship for everyone.

As the aim of FLEMING’s GEP is to define its priorities and interventions towards gender equality as well as to tackle any inequalities that may exist within, the current GEP extends over five (5) priority areas as described below.

In each of these areas, corresponding objectives and actions to be taken are presented; these objectives will be monitored on an annual basis through certain key performance indicators (KPIs), ensuring that GEP’s goals are successfully met.

3.1 Gender equality in research

Gender stereotyping in the academic area promotes gender prejudice and discrimination, impeding women’s career progress. Women in certain scientific fields are less likely to be hired, may be paid less or given more administrative tasks than men. At FLEMING, we are aware of this trend and therefore pay particular attention to maintaining a balanced gender staffing ratio among our researchers and research support staff; in particular, the number of female researchers is equal to that of male researchers during the last five years.



Figure 4: Gender equality priority areas

3.2 Gender equality in recruitment, retention & career progression

FLEMING’s recruiting strategy fully complies with Greek legislation governing the recruitment process, employment relations, salaries, etc., which applies to all public-sector research centers in Greece. It is well established world-wide, however, that women face difficulties being hired or promoted, while female researchers in particular are less likely to obtain grants, be invited to conferences, form professional collaborations or be asked to review papers, despite the fact that such activities are critical for their career progression. Within this context, FLEMING maintains good practices (see tables below) to make sure that recruitment, retention and career progression of female employees are on equal terms to those of male employees.

3.3 Gender equality in leadership & decision-making positions

Enhancing female participation in leadership and decision-making processes, e.g. through women's inclusion in management boards, is recognized as having a major importance for gender equality, with some countries even adopting legislation to enforce their presence. Studies have shown that the inclusion of women in senior levels of management has a direct and positive impact on an institution's performance and its public profile.

FLEMING researchers have elected a woman as their representative in the Administrative Board - Dr V. Kostourou, while Dr. Elsa Rokofyllou is holding an honorary Vice-Chair position since FLEMING's establishment in 1996. In addition, a female researcher- Dr. Maria Armaka- is the Chairman of FLEMING's Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee, while the Administrative Board entrusted its representation in the Greek Innovation Lab for Women to a female researcher, Dr. Antigone Dimas. Furthermore, there is significant participation of women researchers in the Scientific Advisory Boards of the Center: IFBR has 5 members of whom 1 is female (Dr. Fousteri), IBI has 5 members of whom 4 are female (Dr. Kostourou, Dr. Douni, Dr. Tsoumakidou, Dr. Samiotaki), while the Financial Department is headed by Ms Anna Argyraki.

On the other hand, an imbalance is apparent in the case of Institute Directors or senior Researchers A'. Although this could be attributed to the small numbers involved, it does reflect a similar pattern in Greece and internationally, and should therefore be addressed accordingly. It should be noted that the high number of female Researchers C' at FLEMING (figure 5) is mainly the result of a recent recruitment drive.

3.4 Work-life balance

As part of its good-employer policy, FLEMING offers employees a number of measures to help balance their professional and personal/family life, such as flexible working hours and remote working, whenever possible and/or needed. These policies have been further extended and to ensure a smooth transition back to work. Additionally, in the Center's forthcoming building expansion is the reopening of a childcare facility for employees' children.

3.5 Gender-based violence & harassment

Institutional policies on sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence should address:

- a) the code of conduct of employees,
- b) facilitation of reporting incidents of gender-based violence/harassment
- c) procedures for investigating incidences and applying sanctions, and
- d) support provided to victims or witnesses.

In compliance with law 4808/2021, FLEMING is developing a policy to tackle harassment and violence related to gender at the workplace, promoting a culture of zero tolerance towards sexual harassment and violence. The Human Resources Officer is the contact point for incidence reporting, who then informs the members of an investigation committee established by the Administrative Board. The committee is also responsible for the monitoring and appropriate implementation of the policy and consists of:

1. The researchers' representative in the Administrative Board
2. The non-researcher staff representative in the Administrative Board
3. The Legal Counsel of the center

The committee has the right to call FLEMING staff to present their views and may propose to the Administrative Board a sworn administrative examination to be carried out, either by the committee or other persons authorized by law.

4 The way forward – Key areas

4.1 Key priority area 1: Gender equality in research

Objectives	Actions	Timetable			KPIs
		2022	2023	2024	
Maintain gender balance among FLEMING research staff	Incorporate gender dimension into every research activity (application for funding, consortium composition etc.)	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Gender balance within each Institute <input type="checkbox"/> The average number for male or female Principal Investigators <input type="checkbox"/> Gender balance in leading roles within the context of funded projects <input type="checkbox"/> Gender balance in peer-reviewed publications <input type="checkbox"/> Gender balance at events & conferences (invited speakers, session chairs, etc) <input type="checkbox"/> Gender balance in start-ups companies' founders
	Conduct a qualitative survey of the challenges that researchers face and implement solutions from this survey		✓	✓	
	Raise awareness through events regarding the benefits of a balanced gender representation in R&D	✓	✓	✓	
	Boost gender representation in entrepreneurship (i.e. female founders of start-up companies)	✓	✓	✓	

4.2 Key priority area 2: Gender equality in recruitment, retention and career progression

Objectives	Actions	Timetable			KPIs
		2022	2023	2024	
I. Make all phases of the recruitment process gender-neutral	Reflect diversity in job descriptions and interview panels	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Balanced gender representation while in interview process <input type="checkbox"/> Gender balance across all staff categories and retention rate per gender
	Support balanced gender representation in job applications through attractive employment packages		✓	✓	
II. Further support of equal retention and career progression	Develop career progression paths in all level staff	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Gender balance of researchers who progress to a higher level <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluating any possible complaints regarding biased role appointments or poor career progression
	Evaluate performance fairly taking into account career brakes (e.g. maternity leave) within Institutes	✓	✓	✓	
	Support female researchers in their network building at both national and international level	✓	✓	✓	
	Unbiased appointment of senior roles within the departments	✓	✓	✓	
	In-depth study of gender-related parameters affecting staff retention and career progression and design of improving measures			✓	

4.3 Key priority area 3: Gender equality in leadership and decision-making positions

Objectives	Actions	Timetable			KPIs
		2022	2023	2024	
Enhance female participation in the Scientific Councils, the Administrative Board, advisory boards, committees as well as high managerial roles	Support women to be nominated for such governance bodies	✓	✓	✓	□ Gender balance among the candidacies for councils, committees etc.
	Consult with the Directors of the NHRF's Institutes about encouraging women to participate in the Institutes' scientific councils & committees	✓	✓	✓	
	Monitor gender balance in key leading and decision-making positions	✓	✓	✓	
	Organize events for raising awareness about diversity and inclusion in such roles	✓	✓	✓	

4.4 Key priority area 4: Work-life balance

Objectives	Actions	Timetable			KPIs
		2022	2023	2024	
I. Strengthen the balance between work and family life	Deconstruct gendered notions of care through gender-neutral language	✓	✓	✓	□ Balanced number of parental leaves (or other benefits) between the two genders
	Adjust the parental leave schemes to employees' needs	✓	✓	✓	
	Encourage male employees to take parental leaves	✓	✓	✓	
	Ensure that the legislation for parental leaves is well communicated and applied	✓	✓	✓	
	Provide the mothers, who get back to work shortly after childbirth, with flexible work schedules for a six-month period, lactation room	✓	✓	✓	
II. Restore productivity after a long absence	Provide the staff with an induction phase after a long absence due to parental or other reasons (i.e. health recovery)	✓	✓	✓	
	Upgrade digital tools for remote working and connectivity	✓	✓	✓	

4.5 Key priority area 5: Policies against gender-based violence and harassment

Objectives	Actions	Timetable			KPIs
		2022	2023	2024	
Eliminate incidents of gender-based violence or sexual harassment	Designation of a contact point for: accepting complaints in-person, raising awareness and handling any anonymous and identified complaints recorded by a centralized system	✓	✓	✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Frequency of reporting cases of gender- based violence harassment or violence <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with the relevant committee when such cases arise
	Establishment of a specialized and independent committee for the investigation of harassment cases	✓	✓	✓	
	Information about the rights and obligations of both the FLEMING staff and FLEMING as employer at the extent of their responsibility	✓	✓	✓	
	Estimate of the potential dangers (risk factors) of violence and harassment at workplace	✓	✓	✓	
	Protection of the job and support of employees that are victims of domestic violence	✓	✓	✓	