

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN



2022-2025

2nd edition

The second edition of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) of the Biomedical Sciences Research Center "Alexander Fleming" pertains to the period 2022–2025. It constitutes an extension and revision of the first edition, which covered the years 2022–2024, incorporating an updated timetable for the implementation of proposed actions.

The development of the GEP was undertaken under the auspices of the Centre's Gender Equality Committee (GEC), established pursuant to the decision of the Board of Directors (Ref. No 321 dated 14.10.2024). In accordance with Article 58 of Law 5019/2023, the GEC is entrusted with the implementation of initiatives aimed at addressing and eliminating all forms of discrimination. Its core mandate is to foster gender equality and to combat all manifestations of discrimination and exclusion based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health status or disability, age, or sexual orientation, across the full spectrum of the Centre's operations and activities.

Approval of the final GEP version (1st Edition) after consultation by the 257th Administrative Board Meeting/29.10.2021

Approval of the GEP Extension for 2025 (2nd Edition) by the 337th Administrative Board Meeting/14.07.2025



George Panayotou President of BSRC Al. Fleming

Contents

1	IN	TRODUCTION	. 1
2	DE	EVELOPMENT OF THE GENDER EQUALITY PLAN (GEP)	. 2
	2.1	Regulatory framework	. 2
	2.2	METHODOLOGY	. 3
	2.3	AUDIT PHASE- CURRENT STATUS ASSESSMENT	. 5
	2.4	INITIATIVE	
3	KE	Y PRIORITY AREAS AND OBJECTIVES	. 7
	3.1	GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH	. 7
	3.2	GENDER EQUALITY IN RECRUITMENT, RETENTION & CAREER PROGRESSION	
	3.3	GENDER EQUALITY IN LEADERSHIP & DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS	. 8
	3.4	WORK-LIFE BALANCE	. 8
	3.5	GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE & HARASSMENT	. 8
4	TH	IE WAY FORWARD – KEY AREAS	10
	4.1	Key priority area 1: Gender equality in research	10
	4.2	Key priority area 2: Gender equality in recruitment, retention and career progression	11
	4.3	Key priority area 3: Gender equality in leadership and decision-making positions	12
	4.4	Key priority area 4: Work-Life balance	13
	4.5	KEY PRIORITY AREA 5: POLICIES AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT	14

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 for 2024 are presented below:

- 62% of all FLEMING personnel are female
- 43% of all FLEMING faculty 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 Greek Research Centers, the establishment of Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Committees became a legal requirement more recently, under Law 5019/2023. This law outlines both the structure and responsibilities of these Committees and was developed in collaboration with the "National Network of Gender Equity and Anti-discrimination Committees in Research Centers and Independent Research Institutes" (GEARnet, <u>www.gearnet.gr</u>), which was established in 2022. GEARnet emerged from the collective need of Greek Research Centers and Institutes for a more coordinated strategy to confront resistance, address limited resources, and promote lasting structural change.

In collaboration with other Greek Research Institutes, FLEMING has prepared this **Gender Equality Plan** (GEP), adopting the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, 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 2024 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) in October 2021 for a three-year term, consisting of 4 members: Dr. Antigone Dimas, Researcher C', Dr. Mihalis Verykokakis, Researcher C', Ms. Mata Hatzipetrou, Legal Counsel, Ms. Georgia Diakogianni, President's Office Manager.

In October 2024, the GEC has been renewed for a three-year term and now consists of 3 members:

- Dr. Maria Armaka, Researcher B', Institute for Fundamental Biomedical Research, FLEMING
- Dr. Antigone Dimas, Researcher B', Institute for Bioinnovation, FLEMING
- Dr. Christophoros Nikolaou, Researcher B', Institute for Fundamental Biomedical Research, FLEMING

The new committee updated the gender-specific quantitative and qualitative data at the following operational levels of the research organization. Detailed results-conclusions from the quantitative and qualitative data (2017-2024) will be elaborated later in the text.

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.

Following on the direction mentioned in the first version of the GEP that additional sets of qualitative data should be collected for the future versions of the Plan, specifically through questionnaires and interviews reflecting researchers' responses on their sense of belonging and safety in the workplace, an extensive questionnaire was produced and made public during the May 2023. It was generated based on related examples available by other research centers and universities and was further adapted to the realities of Fleming.

Overall, the questionnaire was administered to the entirety of Fleming and was answered by almost 61% of its personnel. It had the following main goals:

• Record the views and experiences of Fleming's people on aspects mainly related to gender equality, but also to diversity and inclusion.

• Set a path towards defining working environment and collaboration conditions within Fleming based on equality, respect to diversity and participation.

• Identify crucial aspects towards drafting a GEP that will help tackle gender equality challenges in a way that addresses the entirety of Fleming and its people.

After a multidimensional analysis of the data collected, the results were communicated to the FLEMING employees. This also served as a means to kickstart internally a broader discussion regarding issues such as harassment in the workplace. This was the first questionnaire of its kind run within the Center, and one of the few run by Greek Research Centers/Institutes.

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. Training, meetings and dissemination of updated policies by senior management, human resources staff, events and communications office are both being



implemented and foreseen to maximize the impact of the GE Plan's actions and provide insights about the measures implemented. Beyond those, other activities such as events and communication actions ensure constant visibility of the Plan.

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 2017-2024. No employees to date have declared their gender as non-binary.





"ALEXAND





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

"ALEXANDER FLEMING" Biomedical Sciences Research Cent

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



Figure 5: Numbers of other female and male employees per stated category (Scientific staff includes scientists & engineers under research training. Other staff includes administrative staff, driver, cleaning staff, guards, electricians, building maintenance, Animal House maintenance)

2.4 Initiative

FLEMING is member of the national network of Gender Equality and Anti-discrimination Committees in Research Centers. FLEMING is also a founding member of the Greek Innovation Lab for Women (The Innovation Center for Women; #GIL4W). 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 genderbased 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.
- Eliminate 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 similar to that of male researchers during the last eight years.



Figure 6: 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, from 2019 since June 2025, a female researcher- Dr. Maria Armaka-served as the Chairman of FLEMING's Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee The same committee is now served by two female members (Vassiliki Koliaraki-Vice president, and Sofia Grammenoudi-member). The Administrative Board entrusted its representation in the Greek Innovation Lab for Women to a female researcher, Dr. Antigone Dimas. Furthermore, for the period 2023-2025, there is significant participation of women researchers in the Scientific Advisory Boards of the Center: IFBR has 5 members of whom 2 are females (Dr. Kafasla and Dr. Fousteri), IBI has 5 members of whom 3 are females (Dr. Kostourou, Dr. Douni, Dr. Samiotaki), while the Grants office is headed by Mrs Poulakaki.

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 B' at FLEMING (figure 4) is mainly the result of a recruitment drive within the previous decade. Current efforts should be directed towards the recruitment of new female researchers as currently only male researchers C are employed at the Center.

3.4 Work-life balance

As part of its good-employer policy and the establishment of an inclusive and gender-neutral organizational culture, 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 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 and discrimination

Institutional policies on sexual harassment, other forms of gender-based violence and inequalities in the workplace should address:



a) the code of conduct of employees,

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

In compliance with laws 4531/2018, 604/2019 and 4808/2021, FLEMING is developing a policy to tackle violence, harassment and discrimination in the workplace. The GEC operates in parallel with the Ethics and Code of Conduct Committee and the Safety Committee of FLEMING which can receive reports/complaints that fall within their respective areas of interest.

The GEC is working towards the development of a reliable and secure digital platform to facilitate the incident reporting, as currently, the Human Resources Officer (Mrs Anna Tzoli) is the contact point for direct reporting, who then informs the members of an investigation committee established by the Administrative Board. The investigation committee is also responsible for the monitoring and appropriate implementation of the policy and consists of:

- 1. The faculty's representative in the Administrative Board (renewed every 2 years)
- 2. The non-faculty staff representative in the Administrative Board (renewed every 2 years)
- 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

"ALEXANDER FLEMING" Biomedical Sciences Research Center

OBJECTIVES ACTIONS			Тімет	ABLE		KPIs
		2022	2023	2024	2025	
Maintain gender balance among FLEMING research staff	Incorporate gender dimension into every research activity (application for funding, consortium composition etc.)	>	~	•	~	 Gender balance within each Institute The average number for male or female Principal Investigators
	Conduct a qualitative survey of the challenges that researchers face and implement solutions from this survey		•		~	 Gender balance in leading roles within the context of funded projects Gender balance in peer-reviewed
	Raise awareness through events regarding the benefits of a balanced gender representation in R&D	•	~	•	•	publications o Gender balance at events & conferences (invited speakers, session chairs, etc)
	Boost gender representation in entrepreneurship (i.e. female founders of start-up companies)	•	~	~	~	 Gender balance in startups companies' founders

4.1 *Key priority area 1: Gender equality in research*

OBJECTIVES	Actions	TIMETABLE			KPIs	
		2022	2023	2024	2025	
I. Make all phases of the recruitment process	Reflect diversity in job descriptions and interview panels	~	~	~	~	
gender-neutral	Support balanced gender representation in job applications through attractive employment packages	>	~	•	~	 Balanced gender representation while in interview process
	Incorporate a description/statement of the Organization's gender equality policy in the texts				~	 Gender balance across all staff
II. Further support of equal retention and career	Develop career progression paths in all level staff	>	~	~	~	categories and retention rate per gende
progression	Evaluate performance fairly taking into account career brakes (e.g. maternity leave) within Institutes	>	~	•	~	 Gender balance of researchers who progress to a higher level
	Support female researchers in their network building at both national and international level	>	•	•	•	 Evaluating any possible complaints
	Unbiased appointment of senior roles within the departments	>	~	~	~	regarding biased role appointments or poor career progression
	In-depth study of gender-related parameters affecting staff retention and career progression and design of improving measures			~	~	
	Use of neutral and inclusive language in all official documents				~	

4.2 Key priority area 2: <u>Gender equality in recruitment, retention and career progression</u>

"ALEXANDER FLEMING" Biomedical Sciences Research Cente

OBJECTIVES	Actions	TIMETABLE				KPIs
		2022	2023	2024	2025	
Enhance female participation in the Scientific Councils, the	Support women to be nominated for such governance bodies	~	~	~	~	
Administrative Board, advisory boards, committees as well as high managerial roles	Consult with the Directors of the NHRF's Institutes about encouraging women to participate in the Institutes' scientific councils & committees	~	•	•	•	 Gender balance among the candidacies for councils, committees etc.
managenariores	Monitor gender balance in key leading and decision-making positions	~	~	~	~	
	Organize events for raising awareness about diversity and inclusion in such roles	~	•	•	•	

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

"ALEXANDER FLEMING" Biomedical Sciences Research Cente

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	TIMETABLE			KPIs	
		2022	2023	2024	2025	
I. Strengthen the balance between work and family life	Deconstruct gendered notions of care through gender-neutral language	>	~	•	•	
	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	>	~	~	~	 Balanced number of parental leaves (or other benefits) between the two genders
	Provide the mothers, who get back to work shortly after childbirth, with flexible work schedules for a six-month period, lactation room	~	~	V	¥	other benefits) between the two genders
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	>	•	~	•	

4.4 Key priority area 4: <u>Work-life balance</u>

"ALEXANDER FLEMING" Biomedical Sciences Research Cente

OBJECTIVES	Αстіоня	TIMETABLE			KPIs	
		2022	2023	2024	2025	
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	~	~	•	٨	 Frequency of reporting cases of
	Establishment of a specialized and independent committee for the investigation of harassment cases handling any anonymous and identified complaints recorded by a centralized system	~	~	•	~	gender- based violence harassment or violence Consult with the relevant committee
	Information about the rights and obligations of both the FLEMING staff and FLEMING as employer at the extent of their responsibility	•	~	~	•	 when such cases arise Cooperate with expert professionals on
	Estimate of the potential dangers (risk factors) of violence and harassment at workplace	~	~	•	۲	discrimination, gender-based violence and harassment
	Protection of the job and support of employees that are victims of domestic violence		~	•	~	 Cooperate with IT experts to ensure the safety of a digital reporting platform
	Update policies for the prevention and combating of discrimination, gender-based violence and harassment at work				~	
	Preparation of a safe online/digital platform for the management of reports concerning Gender- Based Discrimination, Harassment, or Violence				~	

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

"ALEXANDER FLEMING" Biomedical Sciences Research Center