

Monika Enigl

Claudia Holzleitner

## Gender Equality Plan

Date July 2024

**BEST - Bioenergy and Sustainable Technologies GmbH**

A  
T 01  
F  
office@best-research.eu  
www.best-research.eu  
FN 232244k  
District Court Graz  
VAT-No. ATU 56877044



Report

Table of Content

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Fields of action and measures</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1	Ongoing Measures	6
3.1.1	Institutionalization	6
3.1.2	Human Resources	6
3.1.3	Gender competences	7
3.1.4	Recruitment	7
3.1.5	Research & Development	7
3.1.6	Leadership	7
3.1.7	Sexual Harassment	8
3.2	Specific measures planned for 2024/2025	9
3.2.1	Human Resources	9
3.2.2	Recruitment	9
3.2.3	Gender competences	9
3.2.4	Research & Development	9
3.2.5	Leadership	9
3.2.6	Sexual Harassment	10
<b>4</b>	<b>Monitoring</b>	<b>11</b>
4.1	Recruiting	11
4.2	Career Development	11
4.3	Compatibility of private and work life	11
4.4	Parental leave divided in male and female employeesWork Life Balance	11
<b>5</b>	<b>Resources and Budget</b>	<b>12</b>

<sup>1</sup> Nick Youngson CC BY-SA 3.0 Alpha Stock Images

## 1 Introduction

BEST Bioenergy and Sustainable Technologies follows the **three objectives** of the European Commission's strategy on gender equality in research and innovation policy:

- *Fostering equality in scientific careers;*
- *Ensuring gender balance in decision-making processes and bodies;*
- *Integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation content, i.e. considering the biological characteristics and the social features of women and men.*

To do so, the management continuously supports and facilitates the realization of gender equality measures also ensuring an intersectional approach as diversity management shall focus on but not be limited to gender. In this document some of the efforts are presented that are already implemented or planned. Since 2008 there has been constant effort in 6 dedicated projects which were accompanied by external gender experts to enlarge and foster gender competence and to detect blind spots.

The overall share of women at BEST is 30 % and rather high within the energy sector where the average is < 20 %<sup>2</sup> in Austria. The share of women within the scientific staff is 26,72 % (during the last completed business year 2023/24). In 2022 and 2023 76 projects have been led by women. This corresponds to about 43 % of the projects. This value has constantly risen and is above the overall share of females within the scientific staff. Still, the center wants to increase the share of women within the scientific staff and in leading positions and to improve the career opportunities of women in the mid- and long-term. Therefore, regular consultation meetings with general management, human resources, working council, and the equality representative are held. In these meetings objectives are set, tasks are distributed and current processes are evaluated. The latest concrete objectives and measures were defined throughout 2024 and are listed in 3.2.

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<sup>2</sup> [Chancengleichheit in der Energiewende \(2023\)](#)

## 2 Process

In order to realize a constant and long-term development of gender equality an iterative process has been established. BEST frequently carries out analysis. Resulting data are the base for the Gender Equality Strategy and planning of measures. These are then implemented and their impact is again analyzed (see figure below).



This process ensures that

- Gender Equality measures are taken following a quantitative and qualitative analysis
- The process follows participatory principles and that some measures derive from e.g. surveys
- The process is evaluated on a frequent basis
- Deviations and causes are analyzed
- The process is transparent and easy to communicate

The core team to guide this process consists of the Top Management, Human Resources, Working Council and the Equality Representative.

## 3 Fields of action and measures

### 3.1 Ongoing Measures

#### 3.1.1 Institutionalization

Diversity Management has been institutionalized within the center through several measures:

- *Equality principles (embedded in our organizational manual)*
- *Equality representative (with a site in the company's intranet)*
- *Working council*
- *Gender sensitive language on website, in templates and forms etc.*

#### 3.1.2 Human Resources

In the scope of the human resources development e.g. a number of company agreements was elaborated together with the working council with a benefit for the entire center:

- *Flextime*
- *Career models*
- *Travel (time) compensation*
- *Telework*
- *On-call standby*
- *Parental leave*
- *Family Time*

Furthermore, a uniform salary scheme could be agreed upon and a broad range of training and qualification offers has been elaborated. Based on the regulations of the research collective bargaining agreement, development talks are conducted and recorded annually. The achievement of results and specific quality criteria is assessed, taking into account periods of leave – periods of leave do not reduce advancement in our salary scheme. In addition, individual qualification measures are agreed upon.

Women who are pregnant are invited to so called return-to-work discussions (“Rückkehrgespräche”), even before they start their maternity leave. During parental leave or other professional breaks access to E-Mails is facilitated and invitations to company events are sent – the use and participation are on a voluntary basis. The re-entry after maternity leave is accompanied or supported by a mentor.

Furthermore, BEST offers the possibility of minimal employment (“Geringfügige Beschäftigung”) during (parental) leave for colleagues to stay linked to the centre and ensure information flow and knowledge transfer.

The concept of "Personas"<sup>3</sup> was introduced for recruitment and along the employee journey with the aim to diversify the team.

A model of modularization of work was elaborated which allows persons who can/want to work part time to still take over highly qualified tasks.

### 3.1.3 Gender competences

Multiple trainings<sup>4</sup> have been completed by the equality representative and key personnel. Trainings will continue to be developed to tackle gender equality issues at all levels.

### 3.1.4 Recruitment

The initial phase of the recruitment has been changed to an online format that is standardized and therefore mitigates the influence of certain biases. The language and wording in job postings has constantly been improved in terms of gender equality.

In addition, women are explicitly encouraged to apply in the interest of diversity. For new hires, it is ensured, that there are no gender-specific salary differences.

Mentoring is offered to especially young female and male colleagues since 2018.

### 3.1.5 Research & Development

An uptake of the ideas of "Gendered Research & Innovation" by Londa Schiebinger has been realized in a first project – MotivA. The equality representative frequently supports project teams when it comes to gender aspects. Since fall 2021 each project (idea) is scrutinized for gender aspects with the aid of two specific check lists<sup>5,6</sup>. The equality representative actively supports the execution of these checks.

### 3.1.6 Leadership

The first Shared Leadership couple in the Area Management started in 2021 and the model has been further developed and rolled out since then. By March 2024 there are two Shared Leadership teams at BEST. Leadership principles have been amended in terms of gender equality related aspects in 2021.

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<sup>3</sup> E.g.: <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/personas>

<sup>4</sup> E.g. „Gender & Diversity Competences for Scientists“ – a 6 modules course at the TU Graz.

<sup>5</sup> [http://genderinnovations.stanford.edu/methods/engineering\\_checklist.html](http://genderinnovations.stanford.edu/methods/engineering_checklist.html)

<sup>6</sup> <https://tc.tugraz.at/main/course/view.php?id=1932>

### 3.1.7 Sexual Harassment

The internal code of conduct contains a chapter on social responsibility and equal treatment. There is a clear statement that any kind of sexual harassment will not be tolerated at the center. In 2023 key personnel was trained on sexual harassment by the use of the app #GetGenderOnTheAgenda.

## 3.2 Specific measures planned for 2024/2025

### 3.2.1 Human Resources

Internal trainings (e.g. on project management) are scrutinized for their gender relevance and are adapted if found relevant. Special relevance is directed to language and pictures. Furthermore, in trainings both women and men are not only participants but also as key persons in role plays.

### 3.2.2 Recruitment

In recent months BEST's leading and key personnel has worked with the concept of "Personas". This has been being integrated into the recruitment procedure from March 2024 on in order to diversify the team.

For recruitment processes (starting in 2022) the following has been decided:

- Internal checklist: What has to be considered in terms of gender equality?
- Most vacant positions will be advertised full and part time (except for master thesis)
- The equality representative frequently checks BEST's job announcements on the center's website and gives feedback to ensure that men and women are equally addressed
- The share of women within the scientific staff will be raised from 27 to 33 % and kept at least stable by spring 2027

About 10 trainee positions will be exclusively offered to female students. And at least two of three proposals for industry related PhDs will be submitted for and with female PhD candidates unless there are no female candidates available until a to be defined cut-off date.

### 3.2.3 Gender competences

Personnel in leading positions is obliged to attend qualification measures (e.g. internal and external workshops, courses, ...) on gender equality every year. The attendance of the respective measures are considered and reflected within the annual performance reviews.

### 3.2.4 Research & Development

No specific R&D measures are planned yet.

### 3.2.5 Leadership

Compliance with agreed leadership principles for group leaders and Area Managers are evaluated and reflected within performance reviews.



### 3.2.6 Sexual Harassment

Concrete anti-harassment-guidelines or consequences of misbehavior will be elaborated and implemented.

## 4 Monitoring

Continuous monitoring is necessary to evaluate the impact of measures taken. BEST currently collects the following key figures to do so:

### 4.1 Recruiting

- Share of female young scientists (i.e. PhD positions)
- Share of female interns

### 4.2 Career Development

- Female share (Science, Administration, Technicians) as of the reporting date 31.03. (head counts and FTEs)
  - Overall
  - Science
  - Administration
  - Technical Services
- Female share within scientific staff (Junior, Researcher, Senior, Area Management)
- Project Leads

It is planned to monitor the Leaky Pipeline in the future. A concept on how to do so is currently being developed.

### 4.3 Compatibility of private and work life

- Extent of employment overall and divided in male and female employees
- Parental leave divided in male and female employees

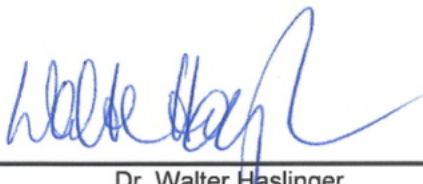
### 4.4 Work Life Balance

A concept was elaborated for the entire center in 2021 based on a survey on the actual state in 2020. After a series of workshops and health initiatives, the survey was repeated in 2022. The employee health surveys will be repeated on a regular basis. Health topics such as physical activity, resilience, etc. are defined on an annual basis.

## 5 Resources and Budget

The Equality Representative has an annual budget to work on gender related measures and their evaluation. Additionally, there are resources in form of support through the management, HR and employee council as well as space resources.

The management hereby confirms that the above described plan and measures are constantly analyzed and evaluated, new objectives are defined and measures adapted and extended according to the results of analyses.




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Dr. Walter Haslinger  
CEO




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Dr. Roman Schmid  
CEO

Graz, 15 July 2024