

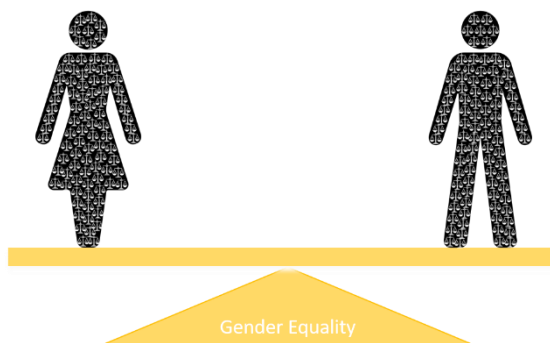


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The Gender Equality Strategy and the Gender Equality Plan 2026-2030

„Ilie Murgulescu” Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Romanian Academy



February 2026

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Abbreviations and definitions

IPC	“Ilie Murgulescu” Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Romanian Academy
GE	Gender equality
GEP	Gender equality plan
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
D	Director
DD	Deputy Director
SS	Scientific Secretary
ED	Economic Director
SC	Scientific Council

Sex	Either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that are distinguished respectively as female or male, especially based on their reproductive organs and structures (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/)
Gender	The behavioural, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/)
Sex vs Gender	A clear delineation between sex and gender is typically prescribed, with sex

as the preferred term for biological forms, and gender limited to its meanings involving behavioural, cultural, and psychological traits. In this dichotomy, the terms male and female relate only to biological forms (sex), while the terms masculine/masculinity, feminine/femininity, woman/girl, and man/boy relate only to psychological and sociocultural traits (gender) (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>)

Introduction

“Ilie Murgulescu” Institute of Physical Chemistry (IPC) developed the Gender Equality (GE) strategy for 2026-2030 to ensure the equality of opportunity for all the IPC personnel, irrespective on their gender. The GE strategy was built on the provisions of the European Charter for researchers and of the Code of Conduct in the process of the recruitment of researchers¹, the European Gender Equality Strategy² and the Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans³. The aim for developing the GE strategy is to ensure that IPC is a safe place for everyone, and all activities and processes that take place respect the principles of equality, diversity, inclusiveness, and non-discrimination.

Taking into account the GE strategy, IPC developed the GE Plan (GEP) for 2026-2030, with concrete actions and measures, as well as indicators to measure its implementation. This document is in fact an update of the Gender Equality Strategy and Gender Equality Plan 2022-2025 showing the commitment, consistency and continuity of the IPC regarding gender aspects.

Enforcing its mission and values, the GE strategy and the GEP of the IPC ensure and promote equality and diversity in knowledge and the acquisition of skills for all. The objectives of the GE strategy are implemented through specific actions that aim to safeguard an equal, inclusive organizational culture and promote gender equality at all levels. As such, the GE strategy and the GEP will proactively promote gender equality by raising awareness, developing relevant skills and competences, ensuring gender balance in decision-making structures and processes, including recruitment, fostering gender equality in research, and integrating the gender dimension throughout the entire research process.

I. Review of requirements, policies, and case studies

Before developing the GE strategy and the GEP, the IPC's management appointed a working group to conduct a literature review of existing requirements, policies, recommendations, examples, and case studies relevant to discrimination, inclusiveness, and gender equality.

¹ https://cdn2.euraxess.org/sites/default/files/policy_library/ttf_goal_2_results_v1.0.pdf

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

³ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffcb06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1>

The resources used in this literature review study are presented in Annex 3.

II. Diagnosis (data collection and analysis)

II. 1. Data collection

- A. The indicators listed below were selected as relevant for the discussion on gender equality issues (according to the *human resources office* data):
- Numbers of women and men in research and administrative decision-making positions (e.g., top management team, scientific committee, heads of IPC Laboratories, heads of IPC administrative services);
 - Staff numbers by sex/gender at all levels, by domains, and function (including administrative / support staff)
 - Number of staff by sex/gender applying for/taking parental leave, for how long, and how many returned after taking the leave.
- B. As part of data collection and diagnosis, during 19.01.2026 - 31.01.2026, an anonymous wide survey was conducted at *IPC* with the following indicators:
- Number of years needed for women and men to make career advancements
 - Number of staff by sex/gender applying for/taking parental leave, for how long, and how many returned after taking the leave
 - Opinions on the work-life balance in the research institute
 - Integration of the gender dimension into research content
 - Perception of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment in the institute
 - Perception (opinion) regarding inclusiveness and discrimination at the IPC
 - Perceptions of the gender pay gap within the institute
 - Perceptions of gender-based promotion practices within the institute

II. 2. Data analysis

An internal analysis of the data collected and reviews of existing policies addressing gender equality and inclusiveness were conducted. The analyses took place in meetings at all levels, with

the gender equality function assigned for developing the IPC GEP involving management, research staff, and representatives of research institute administrative and support services.

The conclusions of the internal audit were reported to IPC Scientific Council, approved by the IPC Management (D, SD, SS, ED), and then communicated to the entire research institute staff.

The Director is committed to the development and implementation of the GEP in the IPC for 2026-2030.

II. 2.1 Quantitative analysis of data

The indicators specified at point II. 1. A, related to data supplied by the human resources office, was collected, and the total number of women and men is listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Numbers of women and men in leadership positions, research staff, auxiliary research, and administrative services

IPC positions	Details	Women	Men
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> leadership positions 	IPC management	2	2
	IPC scientific council	13	4
	Heads of IPC Laboratories	8	0
	Heads of IPC administrative services (other than research)	1	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> research staff 	Research staff total	82	30
	Experienced researchers (CS I, CS II, CS III)	65	20
	Early-stage researchers (CS and ACS)	17	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> other research positions 	Auxiliary research staff (technicians, lab assistant)	6	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> administrative personnel 	Administrative and support services	22	11

The analysis of numerical data illustrated that:

- Leadership positions:**
 - Gender representation in IPC top-management positions is balanced, with a 50:50 distribution of men and women.

- Within the Scientific Council, women are represented at a ratio approximately three times higher than men.
- At the research level, leadership positions (Heads of Laboratories) are currently held exclusively by women.
- Administrative departments are led by one woman and one man, reflecting gender parity at this level.
- **Research staff:**
 - Women represent 73% of employees in research positions, while men account for 27%.
 - Among the total research staff, 58% are women employed as experienced researchers and 15% as early-stage researchers. In comparison, 18% are men employed as experienced researchers and 9% as early-stage researchers.
- **Auxiliary research staff (technicians, lab assistants):**
 - Women are represented at a rate approximately 1.5 times higher than men within the auxiliary research personnel category.
- **Administrative and support services:**
 - The proportion of women in administrative and support positions is approximately twice that of men.

In February 2026, two staff members at IPC were on parental leave, all of whom were women. Maternity / parental leave typically lasts on average 1.5 - 2.0 years, and all staff members return to work after completing their leave. Most IPC employees applied for parental leave once; however, some employees reported two or three periods of parental leave.

- *The indicators specified at point II. 1. B - related to the gender survey were collected, and the data are presented below.*

- **Number of years needed for IPC employees to make career advancements**

To evaluate this aspect correctly, the survey results were divided into 3 categories based on the field of activity of IPC employees: research staff, technical staff, and administrative staff. The analysis of the data showed that:

➤ **for research staff**

On average, it takes 3.3 ± 2.5 , 7.3 ± 4.0 , 6.9 ± 5.0 , 7.7 ± 5.0 , and 7.0 ± 5.0 years to advance to ACS, CS, CS III, CS II, and CS I positions, respectively. Among IPC employees who advanced in research positions, 76.2% were women, 20.6% were men, and 3.2% preferred not to disclose their gender.

➤ **for auxiliary research staff (technicians, *lab assistants*)**

According to the survey, on average, 0 ± 0 (unspecified), 2.5 ± 1.5 , and 5 ± 0 years are required to make career advancements to assistant I, laboratory worker I, and laboratory worker II, respectively. It is important to mention that only 6 respondents represented the auxiliary research staff (4 women, 1 man, and 1 person preferred not to disclose their gender).

➤ **for administrative staff**

It is required, on average, 3 ± 0 , 0 ± 0 (unspecified), 1.6 ± 0.0 , 1.3 ± 0.0 years in order to make career advancements to specialist inspector IA, inspector I, specialist referees IA, specialist referees I, respectively. There were 73% women and 27% men promoted to superior administrative positions.

• **Number of staff by sex/gender applying for/taking parental leave**

The survey also questioned the IPC employees applying for maternity/paternity leave. The data are shown in Figure 1. The study found that 34.1% of respondents requested maternity leave, while 65.9% did not. It is noteworthy that women applied for maternity leave; one questionnaire respondent applied for maternity leave but preferred not to answer about his/her gender, and no male employees asked for paternity leave. In the comments section, one female respondent said that she had benefited from maternity leave before being an IPC employee.

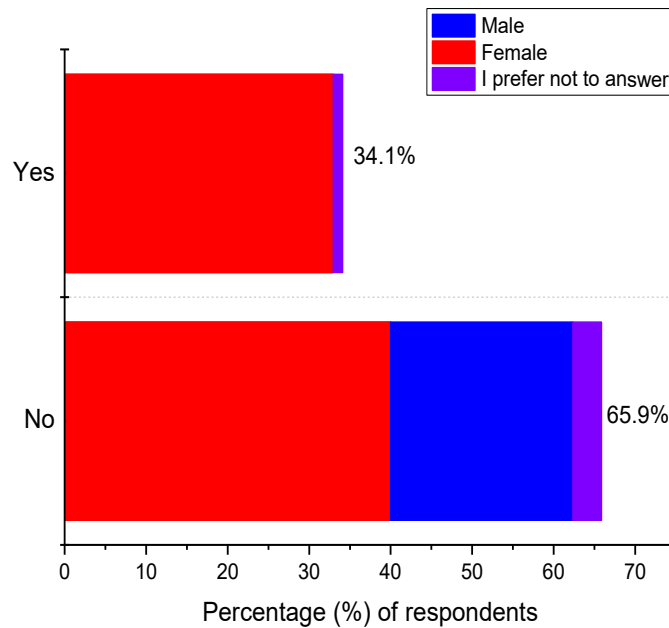


Figure 1. Maternity/paternity leave in IPC - survey questioning

- **Opinions on the work-life balance in the IPC**

The results of the survey questioning work-life balance are presented in Figure 2. The majority of respondents (77.6%) reported a balanced ratio, 16.5% claimed that professional life prevailed, while 5.9 % pointed out their personal life was predominant.

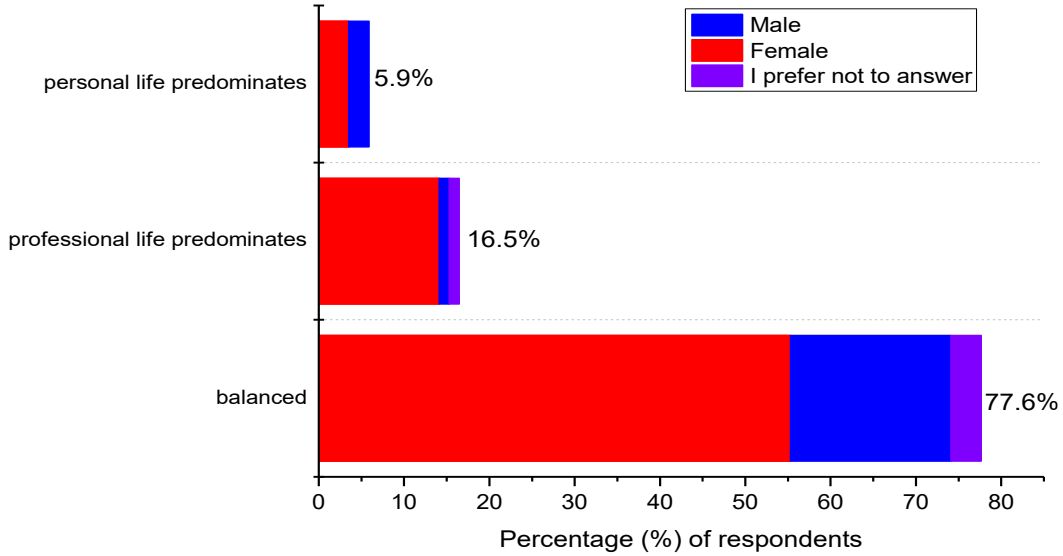


Figure 2. Work-life balance - survey questioning

- **Integration of the gender dimension into research**

The results of the survey questioning the integration of the gender dimension into research content are presented in Figure 3.

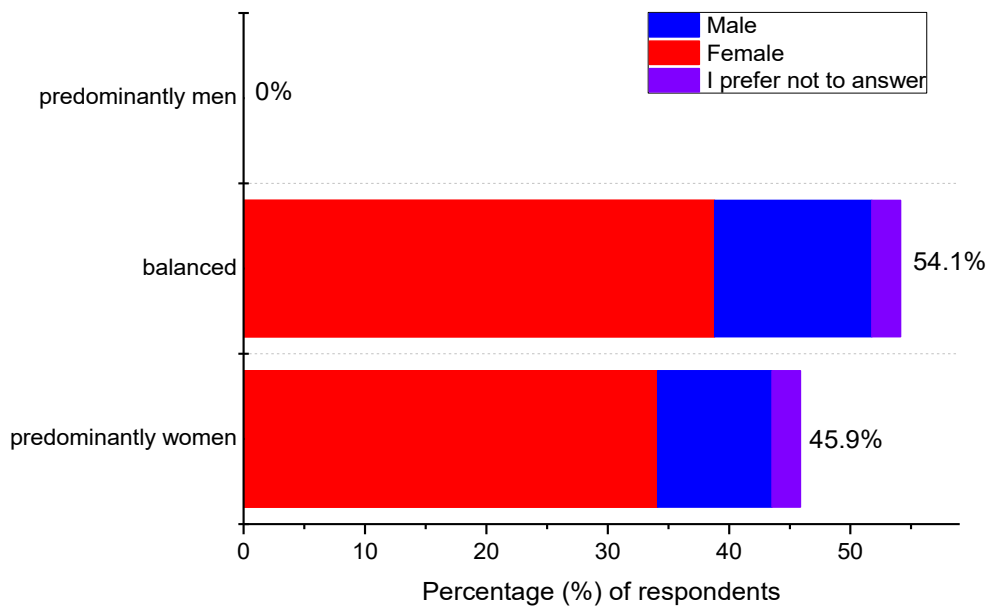


Figure 3. Integration of the gender dimension into research content - survey questioning

According to the survey, 54.1% of respondents perceived the gender dimension within IPC research as balanced, while 45.9% of respondents consider predominance of female. It is important to mention that no respondent to the questionnaire considered that men predominate in IPC research.

- **Perception of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment in IPC**

The issue of sexual harassment in the workplace was also addressed in the survey, and the results are presented in Figure 4. The majority of respondents stated that it does not exist (74.1%), while 25.9% indicated that they have no opinion on this issue. None of the respondents indicated the existence of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, within IPC. Additionally, in the comments section, no respondents reported experiencing violence or any form of sexual harassment at work.

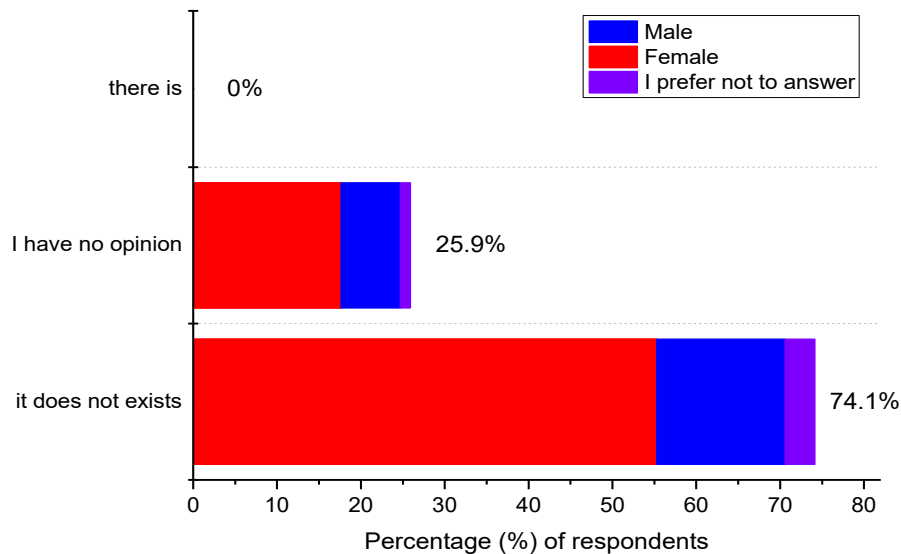


Figure 4. Issues of gender-based violence - survey questioning

- **Perception regarding inclusiveness and discrimination at the research institute**

Gender-based discrimination was also investigated in the survey, and the results are presented schematically in Figure 5. The majority of IPC staff (65.9%) reported that such discrimination does not exist, while 31.7 % indicated that they were not aware of any related issues. A small

proportion of respondents (2.4%) stated that gender-based discrimination does exist. One male participant reported the perception that groups composed exclusively of women may exhibit lower levels of inclusivity, although in a manner that is not explicitly manifested.

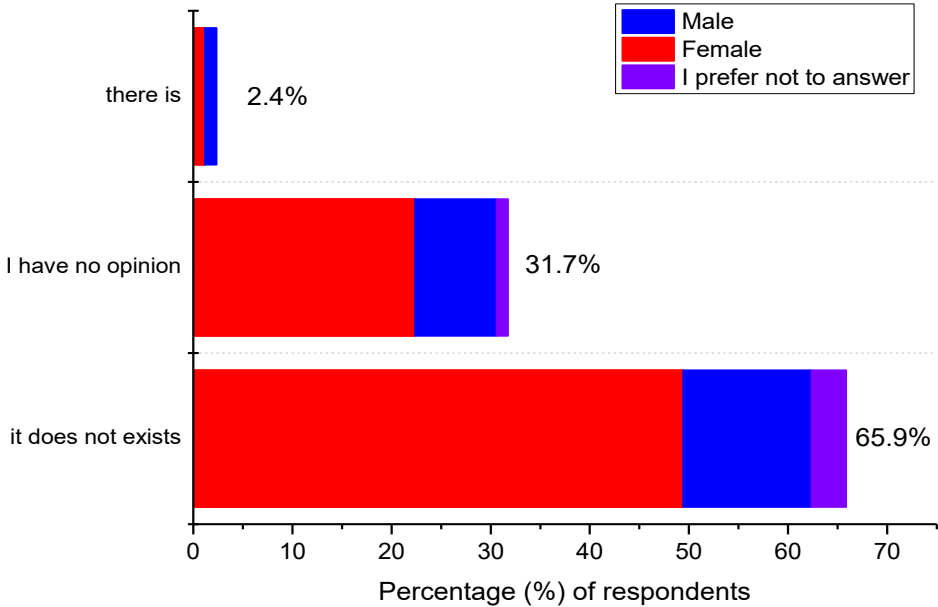


Figure 5. Issues of gender-based inclusion and discrimination - survey questioning

● **Perceptions of the gender pay gap within the institute**

The perception of a potential gender pay gap within the Institute was assessed. As shown in Figure 6, most respondents (71.8%) stated that there are no salary disparities based on gender. Meanwhile, 25.9% reported not being aware of such differences, and 2.3% indicated that gender-based pay discrepancies are present.

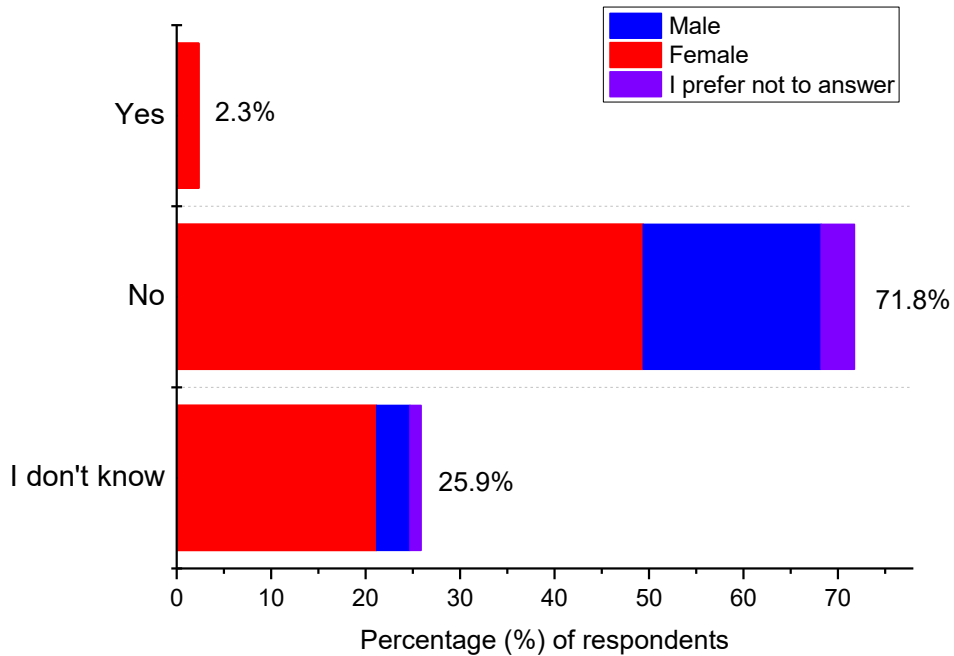


Figure 6. Issues of salary differences based on gender - survey questioning

● **Perceptions of gender-based promotion practices within the institute**

The issue of whether promotions within the Institute are influenced by gender was also examined. The results are presented in Figure 7. The majority of respondents (75.3%) indicated that promotions are not based on gender, while 3.5% stated that they are. Additionally, 21.2% reported that they were not aware of such practices. One female respondent expressed the view that men tend to have a more favourable career progression. At the same time, a male respondent, who holds a research position, mentioned that he had not been able to obtain a promotion for 8 years, despite the fact that he meets the scientific criteria provided for by the promotion regulations.

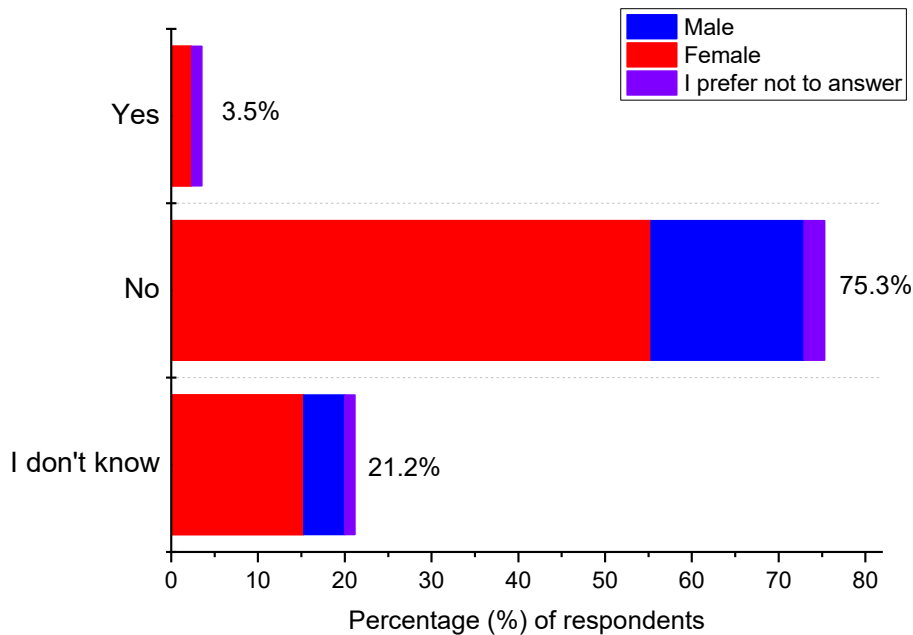


Figure 7. Issues of potential influence of gender on promotion decisions - survey questioning

II. 2.2. Qualitative analysis of data

The qualitative research in IPC showed that:

- There are 71% women and 29% men employed in IPC (research and administrative positions); for research positions, there are 73% women and 27% men employed.
- The research institute is perceived as a safe place, generally without gender-violence. There were no respondents to the survey reporting experiencing violence or any form of sexual harassment at work.
- The research institute is overall perceived as inclusive. There was one male respondent, saying that groups composed exclusively of women may exhibit lower levels of inclusivity, albeit in a manner that is not explicitly manifested.
- There is no gender-pay gap within the institute. IPC’s institutional policies ensure equal pay for equal work, in accordance with the legislation governing the salary system applicable to all employees. Furthermore, recruitment and career advancement processes are based primarily on scientific performance, irrespective of gender.

- There is no culture of discrimination at IPC, in which one gender or the other is systematically favoured. Also, taking into account the survey results as well as a future GE strategy and GEP for IPC related to gender issues, the allocation of supplementary staff and financial resources is not justified.
- The survey did not demonstrate gender discrimination within IPC. In summary, the study's findings indicate that both the situations reported by respondents and those observed at the IPC do not exhibit gender-based discrimination or differential treatment.

The important conclusions of the internal analysis at the IPC are:

- We need to communicate gender relevant actions.
- Some employees meet the established scientific requirements for promotion but are unable to advance.
- In Romania, taking into account that women predominate in chemistry research institutes (e.g., among research staff, 71% are women and 29% are men in IPC), gender discrimination seems to be insignificant.

III. GE strategy and GEP

Based on the internal survey as well as the national and European policies and requirements, the IPC Management (D, SD, SS, ED) pays special attention to the institute's Strategy for gender equality for 2026-2030, and the corresponding GEP implementation. The IPC Director decide to designate a GE officer at the institute. The GE officer has a proactive and consultative role in implementing and monitoring the GE strategy. The GE officer works closely with the IPC Management (D, SD, SS, ED), HoDs, and HR. Specifically, the GE officer contribute to setting up, implement, monitor and evaluate the GEP; provide practical support and tools to the actors involved in the GEP implementation; cooperate with and engage stakeholders (free charges for IPC) at all levels to ensure the implementation of the GEP's actions; raise awareness about the benefits of gender equality in the research institute; assess the progress towards gender equality in the institute. The institute management mandated the GE function (officer) at the institute to develop the GE strategy and the GEP 2026-2030.

III. 1. GE Strategy 2026-2030

The GE Strategy comprises the following objectives for 2026-2030:

- Promoting mutual respect and ensuring equal opportunities for all ICF employees;
- Taking measures to prevent inequalities, promoting the values, and ensuring equal opportunities for all ICF employees.

III. 2. GE Plan 2026-2030

The GE Plan at the IPC comprises key measures, target audience, timeline, responsible persons, and indicators to measure progress.

Action/Measure

1. Appointing a GE officer, with a proactive and/or consultant role, to be responsible for monitoring and ensuring that workplace procedures and practices respect gender equality.
2. Monitoring the perception of gender equality through the elaboration of anonymous questionnaires every 5 years. In the event of imbalances, remedial measures will be implemented. The target is to keep the current situation.
3. Ensuring equal opportunities for all employees in the process of recruitment, staff or career advancement, salary in accordance with the criteria and regulations of advancement and competition according to the professional criteria of competence, regardless of their sex. Generally, in Romania and particularly in IPC, the chemistry domain is more attractive for women.
4. Maintaining a balanced ratio between professional and personal life of IPC staff.
5. Informing employees through free Internet meetings about GE policies.

Target

All ICF employees (researchers, technical, and administrative staff)

Timeline

2026-2030

Indicators

Gender equality policy.

Responsible

D, HR, GE officer

IV. Monitoring and evaluation of the GEP

The implementation of the GEP and the GE Strategy at the IPC is regularly assessed through periodic meetings and reports (every 5 years). The implementation of the GEP will be permanently monitored by the GE officer at the institute. The GE officer is responsible for collecting data and input. The GE officer will perform a first analysis of the progress of the GEP (against the indicators), gather knowledge, and provide feedback.

The GE function at the institute will conclude findings reports (every 5 years), which are then presented to the research institute management and HR for discussions. These meetings will provide valuable conclusions on the implementation of the GEP. These meetings will also provide comments and recommendations that will enable adjustments and improvements to interventions on the GEP for the following period.

The reports allow the continuous review of the impact of the GEP, as well as keeping the wider community informed and engaged in the progress towards gender equality. The review of progress reports includes qualitative information as well as quantitative data, such as updates on human resource data disaggregated by sex, and monitoring data to keep track of the implementation of key actions.

After their conclusion and adoption by the research institute management and HR, the GE progress report is published on the research institute website and communicated to the entire scientific community.

Annex 3. List of sources used for the literature review

(in alphabetic order)

- Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-equality-commission2>

- European Institute for Gender Equality - Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/gender-equality-recruitment-and-career-progression>

- EU Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025

https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

- EUA - Action Plan for Women in Research, Innovation, and Start-ups, public consultation

<https://www.eua.eu/news/member-and-partner-news/action-plan-for-women-in-research-innovation-and-start-ups.html?highlight=WyJnZW5kZXliXQ==>

- European Council – Council of the European Union - gender equality through legislation

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/gender-equality/>

- European charter & code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers

<https://www.euraxess.es/spain/services/charter-code-researchers>

- Guidelines for using gender-sensitive language in communication, research and administration

https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/reutlingen_university_guidelines_for_using_gender-sensitive_language.pdf

- Horizon Europe General Annexes

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2026-2027/wp-15-general-annexes_horizon-2026-2027_en.pdf

- Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans

https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en

- LERU - Equality, diversity and inclusion at universities: the power of a systemic approach

<https://www.leru.org/activities/research>

- Science Europe - Women in Science: Celebrating Inclusion and Shaping the Future of Research

<https://scienceeurope.org/our-resources/women-in-science-celebrating-inclusion-and-shaping-the-future-of-research/>

- Student evaluations of teaching (mostly) do not measure teaching effectiveness

https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/science_open_research_student_eval_teaching_effectiveness.pdf