

Gender Equality Plan of CPSBB (2025-2028)

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SUMMARY

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) of CPSBB is developed as a framework for promoting and implementing gender equality in research, employment, social relations and education among all the management staff, researchers, and employees, involved in projects and internship programs of CPSBB. GEP is intended to be a living document that will be updated regularly to accommodate new actions and developments. The GEP is based on one of CPSBB’s main principles, namely - the principle of ensuring equal opportunities for research and career development of all scientists and employees and in the CPSBB, devoid of discrimination of any kind.

CPSBB’s GEP aims to provide, promote, strengthen, and preserve equal access for all team members to activities and opportunities related to research, decision-making and professional growth, regardless of their gender. In a global context, CPSBB’s GEP complies with the [UN’s Agenda 2030](#), which aims to contribute to the achievement of future sustainable development for people and the planet. Inspired by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, this GEP aims to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention, and career progression of all team members and to achieve gender balance in decision-making processes as well.



CPSBB’s GEP also favors the Bulgarian legislation which guarantees equality of women and men in all spheres of public, political, and economic life. In 2020 Bulgaria prepared a Voluntary National Review for the implementation of the UN Sustainable Goals and adopted a [National Strategy for Promotion of Equality of Women and Men 2021-2030](#).

This GEP is a result of the CPSBB’s policy and commitment to provide equal learning opportunities and career development. It complies with the main strategic objectives of CPSBB to unite a multicultural team of scientists and to advance a top-notch research quality and productivity in the field of plant systems biology and biotechnology up to the highest international standards, establishing itself as one of the leading European research centers.

The Plan features implementation of the three central ERA’s GE objectives for removing barriers for women’s career progression, addressing gender imbalances in decision making processes, and strengthening the gender dimension in research.

The GEP of CPSBB was carried out on the basis of the following methods and sources:

- Deep review of international and national policies, practices and initiatives;
- Collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated quantitative data about management and employees
- Formal and informal discussions with team members
- Existing of a Gender Equality Team - a group of experts who will be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of CPSBB’s gender equality policy.

CPSBB’S TEAM / SEX-DISAGREGATED QUANTITIVE DATA

Curently (2025), CPSBB consists of 56 members incl. Management personnel and Department leaders, Researchers, Administration, and Technical personnel (Figure 1).

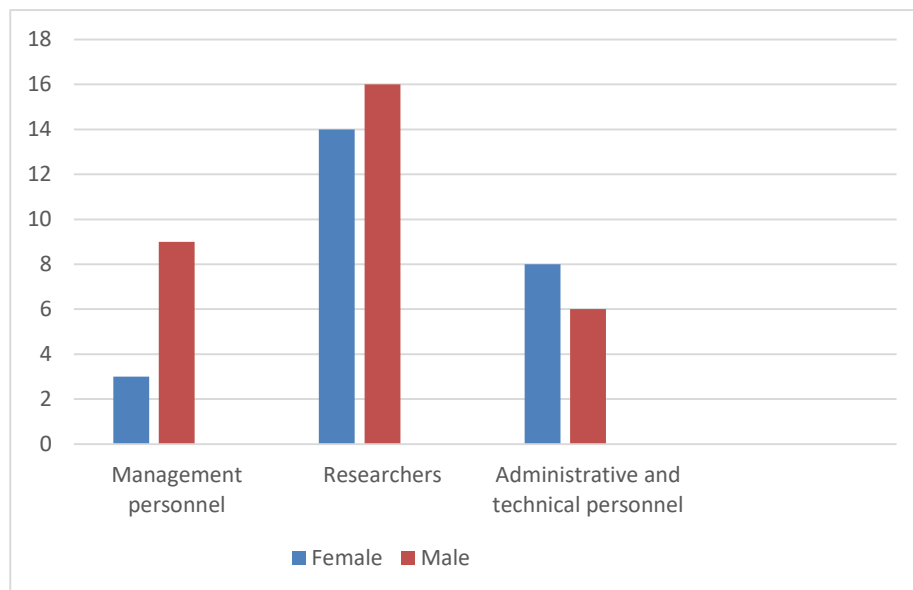


Figure 1. Gender based statistics of CPSBB personnel.

We consider equality to be an essential part of building a fair and sustainable future for the social economy.

Currently, around 47% of our staff and 46% of researchers and 2% of the Department leaders are women. We define underrepresentation of women in the top level management, which will be addressed in the next years.

GENDER EQUALITY TEAM (GET)

In order to implement and monitor the gender equality policy at CPSBB the Management Board of CPSBB has established a Gender Equality Team (GET) which consists of the following representatives:

- **Prof. Dr. Tsanko Gechev – Director at CPSBB**

Mr. Gechev is the main person who is responsible for the implementation of the GE’s policy of CPSBB. All GET representatives report directly to him.

- **Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka – Head of Administration at CPSBB**

The administration will be involved in the implementation of all actions affecting personnel, contracts, and compensations for pregnancy, maternity and parental leave, as well as initiatives for achieving work-life balance.

- **Dr. Gergana Zahmanova – Researcher at CPSBB and Gender Equality Officer**
- **Hristina Vancheva – Communication Officer**

The work of the Gender Equality Officer (GEO) and Communication Officer (CO) will provide information about the regulation in the area of gender equality and will initiate actions to promote awareness of gender equality issues.

GEO and CO will be the first contact for gender equality issues and cases of sexual harassment or gender discrimination.

OBJECTIVES

- Achieving a well-balanced gender ratio and increasing the proportion of women in science and research departments
- Accept official policies and integrate best practices that reflect the needs and interests of both men and women at CPSBB;
- Providing an effective mechanism for monitoring and reporting specific conclusions and outcomes regarding gender equality issues at CPSBB;
- Raising awareness on gender equality issues and promoting a corporate culture with zero tolerance to gender-based discrimination, harassment and violence;
- Introducing gender dimensions in CPSBB’s research activities, decision-making processes, management of work-life balance and supportive work environment

EXPECTED RESULTS

The expected results from the implementation of this Gender Equality Plans are:

- More visible equality work at CPSBB
- Well-being and work-life balance ensured for all team members at CPSBB
- Improved communication between all team members at CPSBB at all levels
- Increased transparency of decision-making processes and policies at CPSBB

- Career promotion of female scientists
- Support for any employee who feels discriminated or experiences disadvantage on the basis of gender, cultural or social origin, and/or sexual orientation

AREAS OF INTERVENTION

CPSBB's GEP sets out activities and measures related to gender equality for a total of six areas of intervention for a 4-year period (2025-2028). The gender equality plan presents measures and activities along with concrete parameters for their monitoring and evaluation (people involved, time frame and indicators for success). The planned measures are chosen to assure the achievement of GEP's objectives and to establish a realistic and efficient internal policy and guidance regarding gender equality within all internal processes, working environment and structure of CPSBB.

On the basis of examination and analysis the identified Areas of intervention of CPSBB's GEP are as follows:

Area 1: Commitment of Human Resources for the GEP's implementation

It is important to find open and visible support at all levels within CPSBB's organisational structure for the successful implementation of CPSBB's GEP.

Area 2: Building Gender Capacity

Awareness raising/training on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers.

Area 3: Data collection and monitoring:

Sex/gender disaggregated data on the management board, the researchers' departments, the administration and students involved in education and internship programs at CPSBB. Annual reporting based on indicators.

Area 4: Gender balance in leadership, recruitment and career progression

Achieving a balanced representation of women and men in the management board of CPSSP for equal participation in the decision-making processes and a balanced representation and career development of women and men among the administration and researchers' teams of CPSBB

Area 5: Achieving a work-life balance for all team members of CPSBB

Ensuring that a supportive culture exists for work-life balance and career development policies by adopting, implementing, and promoting policies and practices that enable work-life balance and support educational, career, and vocational development.

Area 6: Measures against gender-based violence, incl. sexual harassment

An ultimate responsibility of CPSBB's management for maintaining a working environment within it's structure that is free from sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

Area 1: Commitment of Human Resources			
Measure/Activity	People Involved	Time Frame	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting GEP and the work of GET by introducing GET email address to all new team members. Information about news and upcoming events/initiatives will be sent out regularly from this email account. This email will be also the main contact email for all employees' concerns 	Dr. Gergana Zahmanova Hristina Vancheva	Continuous	GET email address promoted to all employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish collaboration with national and international GE-networks and communities to exchange experience 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Dr. Gergana Zahmanova Hristina Vancheva	Continuous	Collaboration initiatives performed Number of established contacts Scale of target group

Area 2: Building Gender Capacity			
Measure/Activity	People Involved	Time Frame	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing regular meetings on gender issues with the team members to ensure sustainability of the GEP and to maximize its impact. 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Hristina Vancheva	2025-2028 (once per year)	GEP included on the agenda of at least one annual Event or team meeting of CPSBB GEP included on the agenda of the Management Board of CPSBB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracting female scientists to CPSBB's team. Part-time positions to female scientists will be offered, including changes in contracts after maternity or parental leave, if needed. Meetings with team members will be organised in order to design and set specific measures that will serve the 	Prof. Dr. Tsanko Gechev Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka	2025-2028	Number of meetings organised with team members Number of female scientist attracted to the team

promotion of female employees.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training/workshops on gender equality and periodic consultations with external stakeholders, GE experts and the academic community on issues related to gender equality activities 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Dr. Gergana Zahmanova Hristina Vancheva	Continuous	Consultations with stakeholders performed GEP and GE activities and initiatives covered Number of participants/scale of target groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and popularize GE best practices of European universities, scientific institutions, and research organizations 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Dr. Gergana Zahmanova Hristina Vancheva	2025-2028	Best practices collected Popularization activities organized Number of participants/scale of target groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the team members' awareness of options supporting their career development as researchers and academic professors or lecturers 	Prof. Dr. Tsanko Gechev Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka	Continuous	Awareness on career supporting options studied Awareness initiatives organised Number of participants/Scale of target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising awareness on the use of gender-sensitive language in professional communication 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Hristina Vancheva	Continuous	Awareness initiatives performed on the use of gender-sensitive language Number of participants/scale of the target groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring that all internal processes and procedures at CPSBB respect gender equality. 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Dr. Gergana Zahmanova	Continuous	Monitoring reports if gender discrimination is detected Annual monitoring evaluation of gender equality in processes and procedures at CPSBB

Area 3: Data Collection and Monitoring			
Measure/Activity	People Involved	Time Frame	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sex/gender disaggregated data on the management board, the researchers' departments, the administration and students involved in education and internship programs at CPSBB. 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Dr. Gergana Zahmanova	2025-2028 (once per year)	Data collected Annual reporting based on indicators.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting a survey to measure experiences and perceptions of gender equality throughout team members of CPSBB 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Hristina Vancheva	2026	A survey conducted Data collected Report based on the survey

Area 4: Gender Balance in Leadership, Recruitment and Career Progression			
Measure/Activity	People Involved	Time Frame	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including both male and female representatives in leadership and decision-making bodies (project managers, Managing Board members, Head of departments) 	Prof. Dr. Tsanko Gechev Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka	2025-2028	Number of male and female experts included in leadership and decision-making bodies Number of male and female experts hired for the position Head of Department Number of male and female experts in the Managing Board of CPSBB
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruiting employees from both sexes in all departments 	Prof. Dr. Tsanko Gechev Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka	Continuous	Number of male and female employees in each department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze recruitment and academic career progression criteria as well as other institutional official documents from GE perspective 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Dr. Gergana Zahmanova	Continuous	Analysis of institutional documents performed

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate and stimulate gender balance in research projects participation 	Prof. Dr. Tsanko Gechev Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Hrsistina Vancheva	Continuous	Communication initiative performed Number of participants/scale of target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enrich and stimulate gender dimension in education and training 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka	2025-2028	Number of female and male representatives included in education and trainings

Area 5: Work-Life Balance			
Measure/Activity	People Involved	Time Frame	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform an internal survey on the satisfaction and well-being of all team members 	Hristina Vancheva	(once per period)	Internal survey performed Qualitative and quantitative statistic data from the survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures supporting the balance between work and private life 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Dr. Gergana Zahmanova	Continuous	Regulatory measures supporting work-life balance set. Popularization initiatives organized Number of employees reached/scale of target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote possibilities for flexible working time and distance work 	Prof. Dr. Tsanko Gechev Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Hristina Vancheva	Continuous	Possibilities for flexible working time and distance work promoted Scale of target group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a paid leave for new parents, including mothers, fathers, domestic partners, adoptive parents and foster parents. 	Prof. Dr. Tsanko Gechev Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka	Continuous	Policy for paid leave adopted;

Area 6: Measures Against Gender-Based Violence, incl. Sexual Harassment			
Measure/Activity	People Involved	Time Frame	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducting an internal survey for experienced bullying, discrimination, gender-based violence or sexual harassment at CPSBB 	Hristina Vancheva	2025-2028 (once per year)	Survey data and analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness in different forms of gender-based harassment (incl.violence) and stereotypes 	Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka Hristina Vancheva	Continuous	Including different forms of gender-based harassment in the Code of Conduct of CPSBB and also concrete measures for protecting all team members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zero tolerance to gender-based violence or sexual harassment at CPSBB's internal policy and culture 	Prof.Dr. Tsanko Gechev Prof. Dr. Vesela Kazashka	Continuous	Disciplinary dismissal and criminal measures whenever gender-based violence is detected
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installing a complaint box at CPSBB for ideas, suggestions, complaints and any other kind of feedback from all team members if they want to be anonymous. 	Hristina Vancheva	2025	Complaint box installed Feedback received
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting non-binary community: - Unisex bathrooms at CPSBB; - Possibility in the CPSBB's intranet for non-binary team members to express their personal gender pronoun; 	Dr. Gergana Zahmanova	Continuous	Unisex bathrooms designated; Self-identifies personal gender pronoun to name in CPSBB's intranet