



**Foundation Immune Engineering for
Global Child and Adolescent Health**

c/o Copartner Revision
St. Alban-Anlage 46
4052 Basel, Switzerland
<https://immune.engineering>

BIIE Gender Equality Plan

Organization: Foundation Immune Engineering for Global Child and Adolescence Health whose Trustees govern the operations of the Botnar Institute of Immune Engineering (BIIE)

Period: 2026 - 2030

Date of Adoption: March 2026

Version: 1.0

1. Introduction

The Botnar Institute of Immune Engineering is a newly established research institute dedicated to advancing immune engineering to improve child and adolescent health in low- and middle-income countries. As a young organization, we are actively developing our company culture, core processes, and HR policies. This presents us with a unique opportunity: to embed gender equality into our organizational foundations from the outset, rather than adapting existing structures.

This Gender Equality Plan represents a strategic commitment that aligns with our mission and values. Excellence in research demands diverse perspectives, equitable opportunities, and inclusive environments where all team members can thrive. This is particularly vital in our field, where understanding sex and gender differences in immune function and pediatric health outcomes directly impacts the quality and relevance of our scientific work.

By making gender equality a cultural priority, we are committing to an equitable environment where every individual, regardless of gender, has the support to reach their full potential. This is how we build a high-performing, responsible, and truly inclusive organization by design, not by default.

2. Legal & Policy Framework

This GEP aligns with:

- European Commission Horizon Europe eligibility requirements



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- Swiss Federal Constitution Article 8 (equality between women and men)
- Swiss Gender Equality Act (GEA)
- UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (relevant to our research mission)

3. Mandatory Process-Related Requirements

This section outlines how the BIIE will meet the four mandatory "building blocks" required by the European Commission.

3.1 Publication

Requirement: The GEP must be a formal document published on the institution's website, signed by top management, and actively communicated within the institution.

BIIE Implementation:

- This GEP will be publicly available at <https://immune.engineering/>
- Signed by BIIE's CEO
- Actively communicated through all-staff meetings, new employee onboarding, BIIE intranet, and annual progress reports

3.2. Dedicated Resources

- The BIIE will commit to providing the necessary resources and expertise to implement this plan.
- Gender Equality Officer/Team: We have appointed an HR Head to spearhead the implementation of this GEP.
- Budget: A dedicated budget allocated annually has been set aside for GEP activities, including training, data collection, and specific gender equality measures.
- Time Allocation: GEP implementation is integrated into the HR Head's existing responsibilities, with approximately **10 hours per month** dedicated to coordination, monitoring, and reporting. External consultants provide specialized support for training delivery and technical compliance activities.

3.3. Data Collection and Monitoring

The BIIE will base its policies on evidence and continuous monitoring, for which it will collect the following types of data:



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- Workforce composition by gender across position levels, contract types, and salary bands
- Recruitment: application, shortlist, interview, and hiring rates by gender
- Career progression: promotion rates, tenure decisions, leadership appointments
- Work-life balance: parental leave uptake, flexible working, retention rates
- Training participation rates by gender
- Biennial climate surveys on workplace safety and equality; first survey planned Q4 2026

Reporting: An annual "Gender Equality Report" will be produced and circulated institute-wide.

Baseline Data (2026):

- **Staff Total:** 118 (Women: 42.37% | Men: 57.63% | Non-binary/Other: 0%)
- **Leadership Positions:** 5 (Women: 20% | Men: 80%)
- **Faculty:** 4 (Women: 25% | Men: 75%)

3.4 Training and Capacity Building

We are committed to building gender equality competence across the organization through conscious knowledge- and awareness-building efforts.

- **Inclusion & Bias Training:** Training for all recruitment panels, Faculty and team leads covering unconscious bias, gender equality awareness, and inclusive workplace practices (3 hours, annual for hiring participants; biennial for all staff).
- **Communication:** GEP progress updates integrated into existing all-staff meetings and internal communications (semiannually).
- **Harassment Prevention:** An interactive workshop for all employees covering recognition, reporting mechanisms, and bystander intervention (2 hours, annual).
- **Gender in Research:** Workshop for all Faculty and research staff on integrating sex and gender analysis into pediatric health research (3 hours, annual).



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4. Recommended Thematic Areas

This section details our objectives across the five thematic areas recommended by the European Commission.

Area 1: Work-life Balance and Organizational Culture

Objective: Promote an inclusive culture that supports the reconciliation of professional and personal life.

- **Implemented Actions:**
 - Flexible working condition arrangements (home office and remote work possible)
 - Ensure meetings are held during core working hours (09:00–16:00) to accommodate caregivers.
 - Enhanced Parental Leave: 16 weeks paid maternity (vs 14 weeks Swiss minimum), 2 weeks paid paternity (in accordance with Swiss law)
 - Additional 5 annual bridging days for all employees
 - Allowing part-time work, provided the role permits it

Owner: HR Head and Director of Admin Operations

Area 2: Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-making

Objective: Increase the representation of underrepresented genders in management and committees.

- **Planned Actions:**
 - Recruitment: Minimum 40% each gender on shortlists (where qualified candidates available), gender-balanced hiring committees (40–60%), structured interviews with scoring rubrics
 - Succession Planning: Gender equality in all planning, identification of women with leadership potential, targeted development

Timeline: Revised recruitment by June 2026; first leadership cohort September 2026; succession planning by December 2026

Targets (2028): 40% women Faculty (from 25%); 40% women in leadership (from 20%); 100% hiring committees meet gender balance and training requirements



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Area 3: Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression

Objective: Ensure equal opportunities in hiring and promotion.

- **Planned Actions:**
 - Benchmark against Swiss/European peers; set four-year targets by career level; focus on PI positions (target 40% women by 2028 from 25%).
 - Gender-neutral language (HR checked), explicit encouragement for underrepresented genders, BIIE equality statement, highlight support provisions.
 - Comprehensive review of all progression processes, identify gender barriers, staff consultation through surveys and focus groups.
 - Annual development conversations, individual plans, equal training access, mentoring programs and promotion possibilities.
 - Gender pay gap analysis by level/experience, equal pay audit for equivalent work, corrective action for gaps $\geq 5\%$.

Owner: HR Head and Director of Admin Operations

Area 4: Integration of the Gender Dimension into Research and Teaching

BIIE's focus on child health makes gender analysis particularly relevant - sex and gender influence immune responses, disease presentation, healthcare access, and treatment outcomes in pediatric populations.

Objective: Ensure that sex and gender analysis is integrated into R&I content.

- **Planned Actions:**
 - Training for researchers on how to integrate sex/gender analysis into their methodology.
 - Annual workshop "Gender in Research" for all research staff on integrating sex and gender analysis into pediatric health research (mandatory for Faculty).

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Area 5: Measures Against Gender-based Violence (including Sexual Harassment)

Objective: A zero-tolerance policy toward harassment and violence.

- **Planned Actions:**

- Written zero-tolerance policy against all gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination; covers sexual harassment, unwanted attention, coercion, gender-based bullying; published on website and in Code of Conduct.
- Establish a confidential reporting mechanism and appoint an external ombudsperson.
- Support victims through counseling services.
- Prevention training for all staff, covering harassment recognition, impact, policy, reporting, respectful workplace; interactive scenarios; advanced session for supervisors.
- Safe intervention techniques, supporting colleagues (integrated into prevention training).

Owner: HR Head and Director of Admin Operations

5. Governance & Implementation

The following table summarizes the concrete measures, timelines, and responsibilities.

5.1 Leadership Commitment

BIIE CEO and Leadership commit to: signing/endorsing GEP, allocating resources, quarterly progress reviews, leadership accountability, championing equality, leading by example.

5.2 Implementation Timeline

Q1 - Q2 2026: Establish Committee, publish GEP on website, introduce GEP to staff

Q3 2026: Baseline data, develop training, design reporting

Q4 2026: Enhanced leave policy, revised recruitment, contract ombudsperson, first pay audit

Q1 - Q3 2027: Launch training, reporting mechanisms, leadership programme

Q4 2027: Climate survey, annual review, public report



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5.3 Accountability

- Annual reporting to CEO, Board, and public
- Regular staff communications on progress
- GEP objectives in leadership performance reviews
- Annual budget review for adequate resourcing

6. Review and Sustainability

This GEP is a living document. It will be reviewed annually by BIIE's Head of HR.
A major revision will take place in 2028 to assess the achievement of long-term goals.

Contact Information: For questions regarding this plan, please contact: Isabelle Kappeler, Head of HR at isabelle.kappeler@immune.engineering.

SIGNATURES

Signed by:

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Stephen Wilson
CEO