

Gender Equality Plan

Author: Mag.^a Dr.ⁱⁿ Greta Pomberger
*Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity at
Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH*

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Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH

Sauraugasse 1, 8700 Leoben

+43 3842 42962-0
office@pccl.at

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Targets

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) reflects a set of commitments and actions to promote gender equality in the organization through a process of structural change. The GEP aims to promote gender equality through the sustainable transformation of organizational processes, cultures and structures that create and sustain gender imbalances and inequalities. A GEP should address not only the visible structure and practices of an organization (e.g. policies and procedures), but also the way in which values are being held (what people say and what they believe) and underlying assumptions (unconscious beliefs, thoughts and feelings) can be developed, including in terms of knowledge creation and its application.¹

In order to be entitled to funding, legal entities which are research organizations from the EU Member States must have an Equality Plan which complies with the minimum procedural requirements set out hereafter. The gender equality plan must be published by means of a formal document available on the website of the organization and signed by the management. The provision of resources and expertise in gender equality is also essential for the implementation of the plan. Data collection and monitoring will be done by collecting personnel data on a gender-disaggregated basis and reporting annually on the basis of indicators. Furthermore, staff and decision-makers will be trained on gender equality and unconscious gender bias.²

The Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH (hereinafter referred to as "PCCL") attaches great importance to gender equality and the inter-structural inclusion and promotion of individuals, regardless of gender or origin (diversity). This applies at all levels of the company. Working in an equality-oriented manner is one of the PCCL's main concerns. There is no tolerance of structures or incidents of discrimination at the PCCL. Neither will any form of sexualized violence be tolerated, without exception. In any case, the PCCL takes active steps against it.

All employees have the possibility to contact the Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity as a working unit of the Legal Department for all questions related to gender equality and diversity issues. The Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity takes up her work in order to prevent and eliminate gender inequalities and to dissolve inequalities in the society structure, which also have an impact on the work in the company.

As in all leading scientific and technical institutions worldwide, the PCCL is challenged by the low representation of women* at all levels of the academic career. In this respect, the potential, knowledge and perspectives that female employees would bring are also being lost.

¹ European Commission, Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (2021) 11.

² European Commission, Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (2021) 9.

The need for greater participation of women* at all academic levels of STEM professions should therefore be a matter of awareness and is beyond question.

In this respect, the PCCL sets itself the following targets:

- Elimination of gender inequalities and discriminating situations
- Enforcement of higher quota of women* in all areas of the company
- Compatibility of studies, career and care work for all students and employees
- Adaptation of work processes to promote equal opportunities
- Ongoing internal training on gender and diversity issues

Hereinafter, the responsibilities and measures at the PCCL that are suitable to promote the achievement of these targets will be presented. They will be presented and discussed in a transparent and objective manner.

Data Analysis

In order to prepare the 1st Gender Equality Plan for the period March 2022-March 2024, data on employees from 2020 and 2021 was collected and analysed. The proportions of female and male employees in the areas of "Administration", "Technicians" and "Scientists" were analysed and presented in absolute figures for each quarter. The full-time equivalent (FTE) was also presented for each quarter. The distribution of international employees was also examined and presented according to gender and nationality.

The following results of the data analysis from 2020 and 2021 could be summarized:

- The data analysis from 2020 and 2021 showed that women* are underrepresented as scientists and technicians in the PCCL as a company in the scientific and technical field. However, a majority of women* worked in administration.
- The PCCL had a high turnover of employees. In 2020 and 2021, 30% female international employees and 70% male international employees worked at the PCCL. Especially in countries where patriarchal structures are strongly prevalent in society (Iran, Pakistan, India), only or mostly men visited us.
- The majority of women* are underrepresented in management positions within the company. In divisional management and Group management, the male share of employees outweighs the female share with 5 people to just one.
- The Supervisory Board, the General Assembly, the Scientific Advisory Board and the Strategy Board are represented exclusively by men.

In order to be able to observe the development of the gender distribution within the staff over the years (the proportion of female colleagues in various positions is used here as an indicator), the same data analysis has now also been carried out for the years 2022 and 2023.

The following developments could be observed based on the data analysis from 2022 and 2023³:

- The data analyses from 2022 and 2023 also showed that women* are still underrepresented as scientists and technicians in the PCCL as a company in the scientific and technical field.⁴ While the proportion of women* increased to 39.9%

³ See annexes.

⁴ See annex I.A.

in 2021, with male employees accounting for 60.1%, the proportion of women fell again by 1.2% in 2022.

- In 2023, however, the proportion of women* rose again to 39.5 % compared to 60.5 % male colleagues. The proportion of women* has therefore fluctuated since 2020 and nevertheless increased from 2020 to 2023 to almost 40% in 2023.⁵
- The goal is to at least maintain this figure in the coming years and, above all, to increase it.
- Due to the purpose of the company, the PCCL has always had a high fluctuation of employees. As a reminder: In 2020 and 2021, 30% female international employees and 70% male international employees worked at the PCCL.
- In 2022, we had 33% female international colleagues and 67% male colleagues.
- In 2023, we also saw a slight improvement in the proportion of women*, with 36% international female colleagues and 64% international male colleagues.⁶
- As with the data analysis from 2020 and 2021, it was noticeable in 2022 and 2023 that the employees from countries with prevailing patriarchal structures (Iran, Pakistan, India) were still exclusively men. The female international colleagues also increasingly came to us from bordering countries. ⁷ This could be an indication that female scientists participate less (far) in scientific exchange on site due to private care work.
- The majority of women* were underrepresented in management positions within the company in 2020 and 2021.
- Measured in terms of FTE, successes in increasing the proportion of women* can be seen here for 2022 and 2023. In 2023, the proportion of women* in management positions (FTE) was 39.29% compared to 60.71% of male colleagues. ⁸ Here, too, the aim for the coming years is to at least maintain this figure, but above all to improve it further.
- Unfortunately, the Supervisory Board, the General Assembly, the Scientific Advisory Board and the Strategy Board were still exclusively represented by men in 2022 and 2023. Women* have no decision-making power here, which is extremely critical.

⁵ See annex I.B.

⁶ Note: This improvement from 2022 to 2023 should be interpreted with caution due to the low absolute figures. However, there was an improvement compared to 2020 and 2021.

⁷ See annex I.C.

⁸ See annex I.D.

Evaluation of developments in recent years based on the indicators:

Indicators	2020 & 2021	2022 & 2023	Progress Evaluation
female* share of employees (per capita in %)	38,7 % (2020) 39,9 % (2021)	38,7 % (2022) 39,5 % (2023)	→
International female* share of employees (per capita in %)	30%	33 % (2022) 36 % (2023)	↑
Female* management staff quota (FTE)	25,44 % (2020) 21,88 % (2021)	36,67 % (2022) 39,29 % (2023)	↑↑
Female* share in supervisory and control bodies (per capita in %)	0	0	↓

Responsibility

The effective GEP is a strategic document that involves the entire organization of a company. The GEP requires the support and formal commitment of senior managers. There are ways to involve the whole organization in developing a plan, in initial audits or reviews of the issue, in setting targets, in reviewing and introducing new ways of working, and in communicating the plan in general.

Relevant functions to be included throughout the organization may be the management, senior managers, administrative staff, including human resources and the legal department, and gender equality specialists.⁹

It is the task of the management of the PCCL to ensure the implementation of the above-mentioned goals by means of the described measures (with the involvement and control of the Supervisory Board). The Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity supports the management in this task. The leaders (division head, group leader and project leader) in the PCCL also have to actively ensure that all measures are complied with and implemented in their area.

Other units of the PCCL, such as the Controlling Unit, the Public Relations Unit and the Legal Department, have the task of supporting the process of implementing the aforementioned targets and measures. A future-oriented and interactive cooperation of these areas is assumed.

The Gender Equality Plan is hereby considered as adopted by the Management of the PCCL.

POLYMER COMPETENCE CENTER LOEBEN GMBH

CEO



⁹ European Commission, Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (2021)

Measures

When the first GEP (2022-2024) was drawn up, specific measures for implementing the gender equality objectives were presented for the first time. These measures were initiated by the Gender Equality & Diversity Officer and their implementation was approved by the Executive Board. The measures developed cover five areas, namely: work-life balance and organizational culture, gender balance in leadership and decision-making, gender equality in recruitment and career advancement, integration of the gender perspective in research and teaching content and measures against gender-based violence, in particular sexualized violence.¹⁰

Over the past two years, work has been carried out on implementing the measures. The measures have longer-term validity and are therefore not "implemented" or "completed". Rather, it is important to examine the development of the measures and their impact when drawing up the Gender Equality Plan. For this reason, the current developments regarding the individual measures were written down.

1. Gendercontrolling and Monitoring

Measure „Gendermonitoring“

Internal gender monitoring takes place once a year. The annual reports are intended to have one particular focus (e.g. gender pay gap, visibility of female academics, secondment and incoming academics). The gender monitoring reports can be used to determine the measures for the future work of the Gender Equality & Diversity Officer. Problems can be identified, presented and tackled in this way. However, it must be noted that monitoring cannot currently cover non-binary people¹¹ due to the data situation. The data from monitoring is therefore binary and cannot and should not reflect reality.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

In 2023, the first gender monitoring on a specific topic was carried out with "Final theses of Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH and the whereabouts of the researchers". This report was sent internally to all employees and will be included in the company management.

¹⁰ Note: The numbering of the measures does not provide any information about their preference or importance.

¹¹ Definition: "Non-binary" describes a wide range of different ways of experiencing one's own gender: Many non-binary people locate their gender identity between male and female, i.e. they are neither entirely female nor entirely male, or neither always female nor always male. Some have a non-binary identity that moves or changes fluidly between male and female. Still others have a non-binary gender that is completely independent of the concepts of "man" and "woman". This can also include having no gender or a neutral gender identity.

Measure „Gendercontrolling“

The main task of gender controlling is to support company management in integrating gender aspects into planning and management processes, e.g. as part of target agreements or the performance-oriented funding allocation.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

With the adoption of gender controlling in 2022, the resources required to implement equality for all employees in the company were included in the annual budget. It was ensured that sufficient resources are available for this area of work.

2. Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity

Measure „Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity“

In the past, there was no separate department for equality and diversity at PCCL. Matters that fell within this area were dealt with by the Legal Department and the Management Board.

It was decided in January 2022 to appoint a Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity in the Legal Department to deal with this complex issue. The employee entrusted with this task has the necessary expertise and training to deal with this topic comprehensively.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

Since 2022, the company has had a Coordinator for Gender Equality and Diversity. Since then, she has been responsible for implementing the measures from the GEP and provides employees with ongoing information on the topic. She also takes part in various networking and training events on the topic.

3. Gender-sensitive Representation & Language

Measure „Gender-sensitive Representation & Language“

The (internal and external)¹² use of inclusive language makes all employees feel included and respected. The use of gender-sensitive language also demonstrates to the outside world that PCCL and all its employees are actively committed to diversity and inclusion.

A guide written by the and other instructions made available via the "Moodle" e-learning platform are intended to help all employees familiarize themselves with this topic and

¹² Note: "Internal and external" use of gender-sensitive language in this context means using gender-sensitive language not only in official letters (e.g. proposals, contracts), but also in everyday language use. This also includes not using the generic masculine in a way that applies to all genders.

implement the instructions on the use of gender-sensitive language. The Coordinator for Gender Equality and Diversity uses the guide to present a preferred gender method to be used uniformly by employees.

Regardless of gender-sensitive language, all PCCL employees must use politically correct¹³ language. Workshops on gender-sensitive representation and language can be offered at any time if requested by employees.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

The internal German Guide to gender-sensitive language has been available since January 2023.

This gives employees access to a document designed to help them use gender-sensitive language in the long term. Many employees already use this way of communicating without any problems. Unfortunately, however, there is also resistance from individual colleagues (as in society as a whole). In the coming period, it is important that the management communicates the need for all employees to use gender-sensitive language more frequently.

4. Recruiting Measures

Measure „Recruiting Measures“

We aim to increase the proportion of women* in our organization and therefore strive to fill positions with women*. Accordingly, women* should be particularly encouraged to apply for positions in the interests of gender equality. This also applies to internships.

Discriminatory questions must never be asked during job interviews. The suitability of applicants is assessed without using discriminatory criteria. Career delays due to private care work are taken into account in the selection process so that applicants are not disadvantaged. Female researchers should be invited to career fairs and their positioning as experts must be a priority.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

PCCL is currently working on the recruitment process (especially job advertisements) and the company's external image. The company aims to become more attractive to female colleagues and is also cooperating with other companies and organizations in this regard. This measure is the main focus of the current GEP period.

¹³ Definition: "Politically Correct Language" means a way of language that does not offend or discriminate individuals. The use of expressions and ways of speaking that offend other people because of their particular characteristics (e.g. origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, skin color) is not politically correct.

5. Gender-sensitive Conferences & Events

Measure „Gender-sensitive Conferences & Events“

The general underrepresentation of women* in STEM professions means that only a few women* are represented at PCCL conferences and events. Organizers must actively counteract this problem. As the Public Relations department is responsible for events at the PCCL, it has worked with the Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity to create a gender-appropriate checklist for planning events. Among other things, this checklist should include an appropriate number of female speakers and moderators, as well as preferred subject areas in which comparatively more women* are active.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

Since the development of the checklist for gender-appropriate events, this has been taken into account in the organization. Nevertheless, more work needs to be done in the future to ensure that more women* are invited as speakers at events.

6. Career Programs & Mentoring

Measure „Career Programs & Mentoring“

With the help of mentoring measures, women* at all levels of education can be encouraged to learn and pursue a STEM profession. PCCL will increasingly implement the promotion and mentoring of women* in the course of project work.

It would also be possible to accompany and guide master's and doctoral students as part of the mentoring program. It is particularly important at PCCL to retain and support employees in the company after their studies. TOP-Job Sharing should also be further promoted for post-doc positions.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

Now that most of the measures have been implemented in the first GEP period (2020-2022), it is time to work on mentoring programs within the company and/or to get female colleagues interested in external mentoring programs (e.g. FFG program called "INNOVATORINNEN Leadership"). The focus in the coming second GEP period (2024-2027) will be on these measures.

7. Internal Awareness-Raising Trainings for Employees

Measure „Internal Awareness-Raising Trainings for Employees“

All employees must be sensitized to these issues so that equality and diversity are lived as values in the company. There must also be regular (joint) reflection on behavior.¹⁴ Internal training courses and workshops on gender and diversity are therefore offered.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

Since spring 2023, there has been internal "Gender & Diversity Training" for employees, which is permanently available on the online training platform "Moodle". For more intensive training needs, the Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity is available to employees.

In 2023 and 2024, the PCCL also organized an event specifically on the topic of "Women* in Technology" to mark the International Women's Day. Lectures and workshops on the topic were held at these events. This series of events is to be continued in the coming years.

8. Relations Work at Educational Institutions

Measure „Relations Work at Educational Institutions“

With the help of open days, information days, brochures, videos, etc., girls* and young women* can be motivated to work at the PCCL in the future or to take up a relevant university degree. The Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity and the Public Relations Office are therefore constantly coordinating the organization of such measures. As soon as the pandemic situation allows, taster days for girls* and young women* in particular will be held on site at the PCCL premises. This type of event was held successfully before the pandemic¹⁵ and should therefore be continued and expanded in the future.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

We were able to attract numerous women* as speakers at the 31st Leoben Plastics Colloquium, in contrast to previous years. Furthermore, the PCCL was also able to introduce research activities to some pupils, most of them girls. There are also plans to continue offering information days specifically for girls* and women*. ZAM Styria and Women in Tech e.V provided their expertise at the themed afternoon Women* in Technology, which took place in 2023. Some students participated at the event and it also served to make women* more visible.

¹⁴ See: European Commission, Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (2021) 28 ff.

¹⁵ See: „TakeTech“ under <https://taketech.sfg.at/>.

9. International Exchange

Measure „International Exchange“

Unfortunately, fewer women* come to the PCCL as scientists in the course of international exchanges. In the course of incoming activities, it should therefore be taken into account that women* should preferably visit the PCCL as scientists.

In the case of equal qualifications of female* scientists who wish to visit the company as incoming scientists, women* must be given priority.

In addition, women* from the PCCL must also be more actively encouraged to undertake outgoing activities. The public relations department is involved in this (e.g. dissemination of experience reports in the course of public relations work).

Developments since the first GEP 2022

Since 2020, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of women* among international colleagues. This is probably due to the fact that project managers are now also taking care to motivate more women* from abroad to work on PCCL projects. This is mandatory for EU-funded projects in particular and is therefore having the desired positive effect. Nevertheless, we must continue to work on increasing the proportion of women* in this measure as well.

10. Family-Friendly Infrastructure

Measure „Family-Friendly Infrastructure“

The PCCL promotes the use of parental leave by all genders. In the future, the aim is to encourage not only mothers but also more fathers to take parental leave at PCCL.

Employees who are parents are permitted to work from home (where practical) after consultation with their supervisor. Working hours and the holding of meetings should also be geared towards the needs of parents or employees who are carers.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

Since the previous first GEP period (2022-2024), the PCCL has made progress, particularly with regard to the take-up of paternity leave by male managers. The "domino effect" is likely to have had a significant impact here and motivated fathers to take this leave entitlement as well. In most cases, fathers remain marginally employed as managers during parental leave and therefore continue to have an insight into the management of the business.

11. Possibility of working from Home

Measure „Possibility of working from Home“

Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH has been offering its employees generous home office options for some time now. With this in mind, people working in care work in particular, as well as menstruating/menopausal or chronically ill people, should also have the opportunity to work from home on difficult days.

In this respect, the company supports all employees in carrying out their work despite the additional workload. In compliance with data protection and employee rights, the persons concerned can inform their supervisor of any "additional physical burden"¹⁶ and agree to work from home on the days in question.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

From 2022 to 2024, Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH also supported employees who wanted or had to do some of their work from home. Open communication with supervisors and empathy are also important here.

12. Measures against Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

Measure „Measures against Discrimination and Sexual Harassment“

In order to prevent discrimination and sexualized violence, a code of conduct, which will be available on the company's website, will be drawn up by the Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity.

Procedures and processes that take place in the event of discrimination and sexualized violence are defined in advance. In this way, the responsible persons can intervene in the best possible way in the event of a report and investigate internally. Bullying is dealt with as a separate additional topic in the Code of Conduct.

All employees are made aware of these issues and, above all, trained. Leadership staff in particular must be trained. In any case, the Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity is the reporting point for those affected and must act discreetly. If sexualized violence occurs, the management must also be informed.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

The Code of Conduct against violence and bullying in the workplace has been available to employees since December 2022. The code is available in German and English and can be accessed permanently online. It is also available on the company's websites.

¹⁶ Note: The wording "additional physical burden" can be adopted and does not need to be elaborated further.

13. Cooperation with the Gender Equality Office of the University of Leoben

Measure „Cooperation with the Gender Equality Office of the University of Leoben“

As many PCCL employees also work at the Montanuniversität Leoben, networking with the Gender Equality Officer at the University of Leoben is planned. Joint projects are also planned for the future.

Developments since the first GEP 2022

Contact with the Gender Equality Officer at Montanuniversität Leoben started in spring 2024. A more in-depth exchange and possible collaboration is being planned.

Monitoring

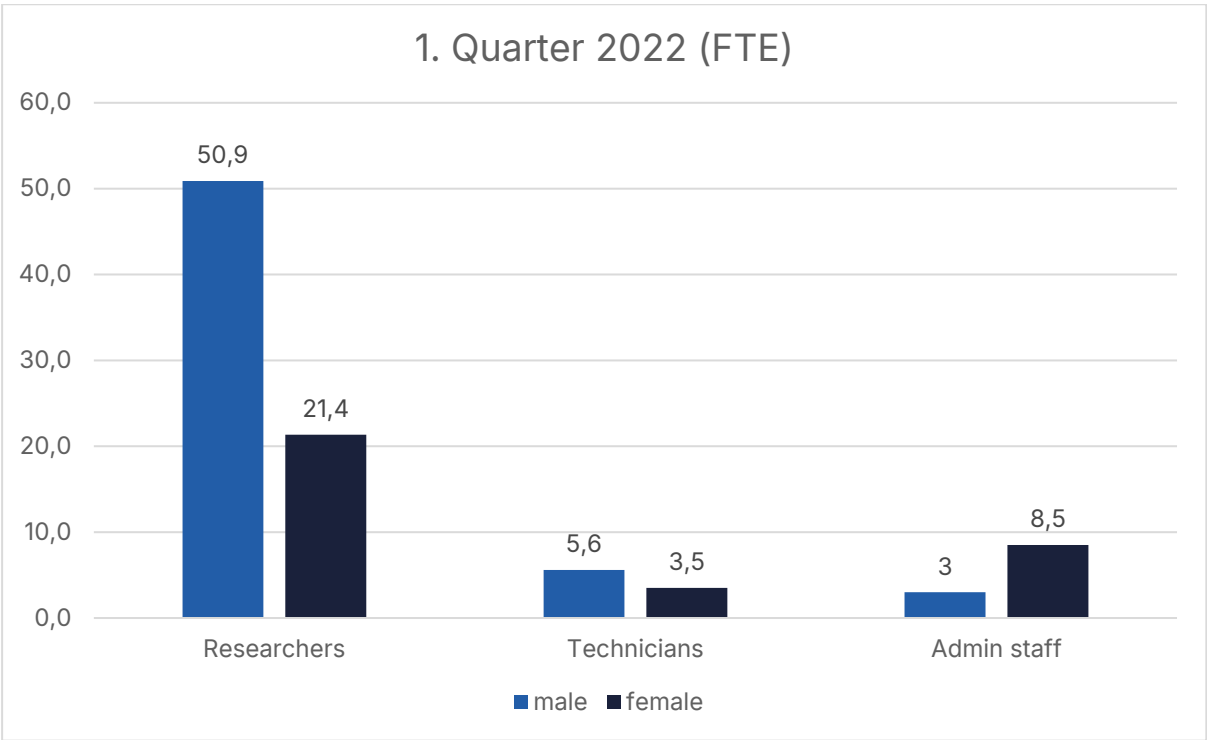
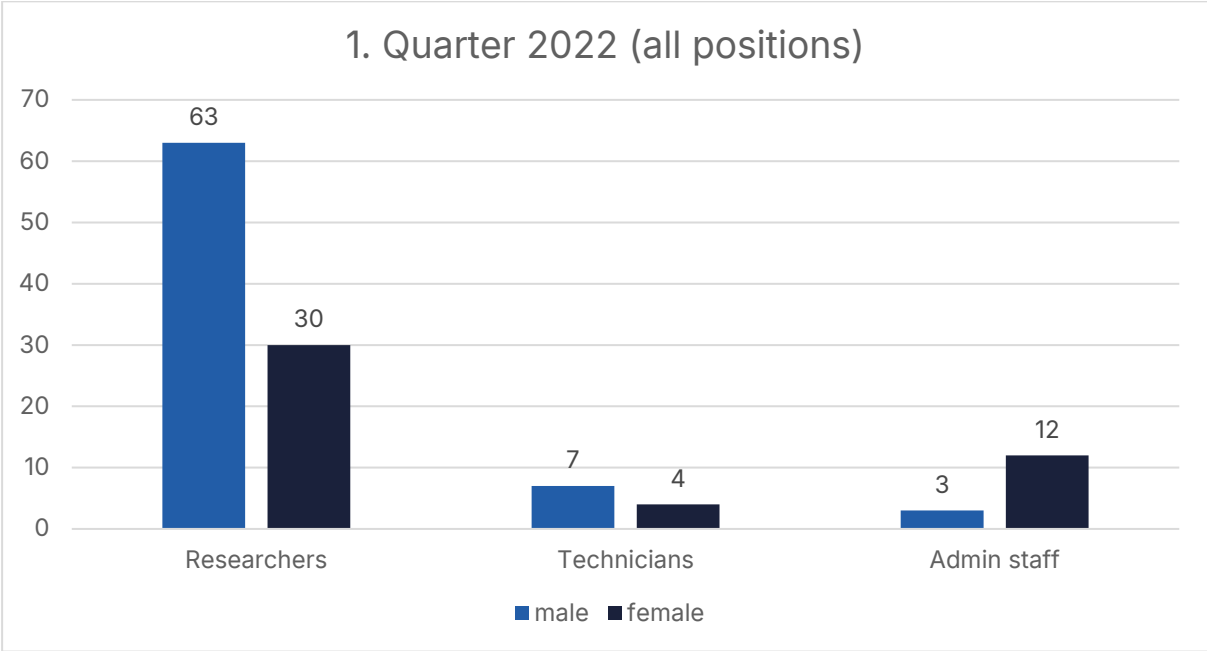
The efficient implementation of the above measures is monitored by the Coordinator for Gender Equality & Diversity, who reports to the Management (CEO & CSO).

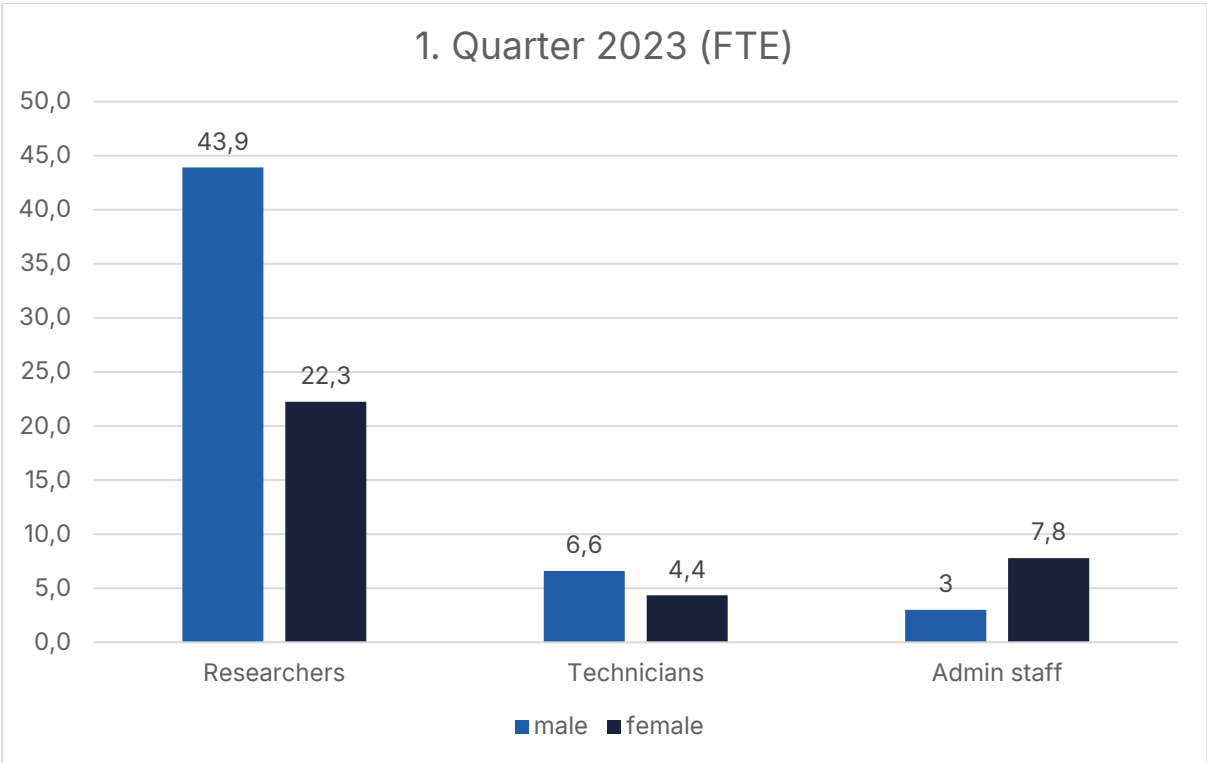
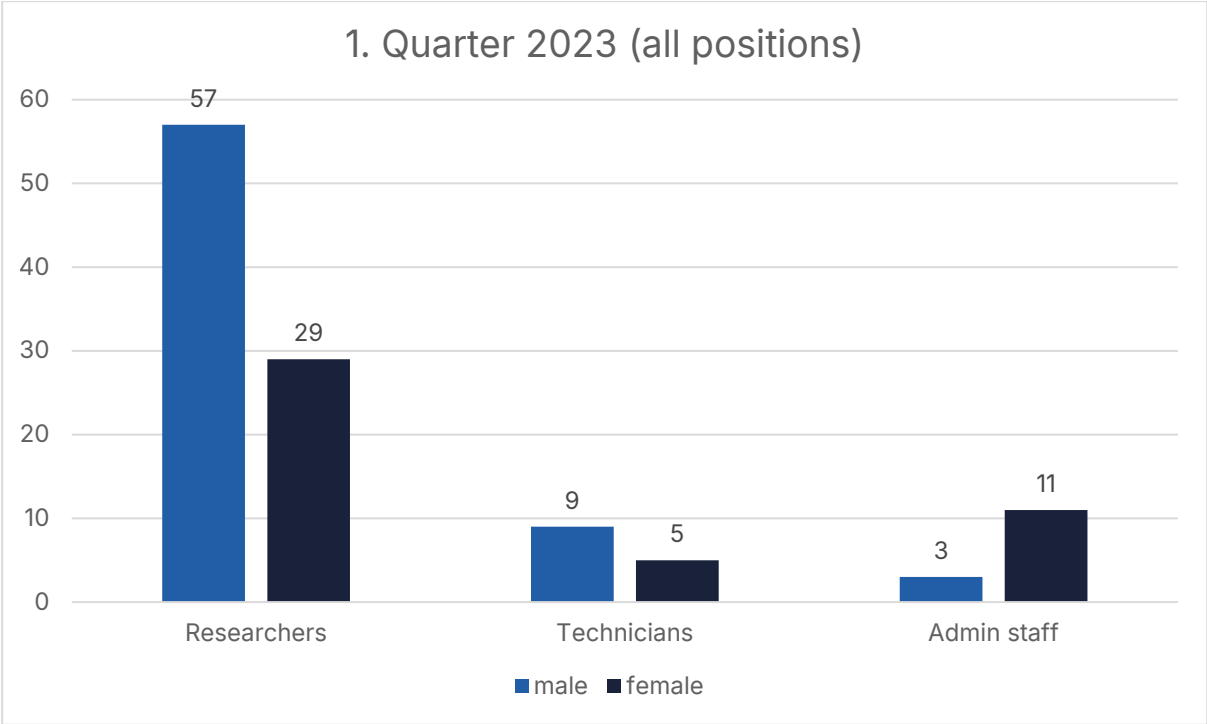
In addition, annual data surveys and evaluations are carried out to assess the success of the measures. An annual monitoring report is prepared for this purpose. If certain conditions should get acutely worse, countermeasures will be worked out and taken as soon as possible. Otherwise, the measures are adapted to the respective results of the annual reports.

Studies on specific issues (also in cooperation with other institutions) are conducted as required.

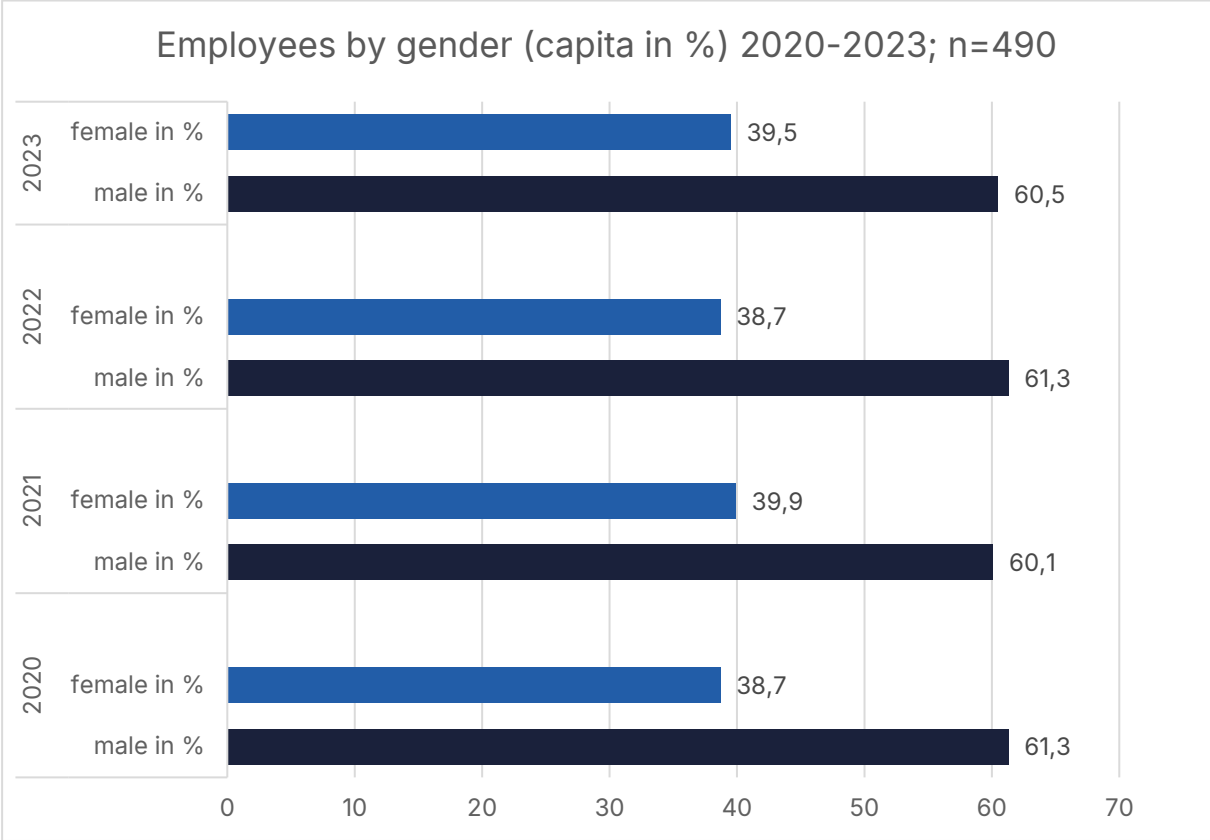
Annex I.

A. Gender analysis of employees at the PCCL in 2022 and 2023

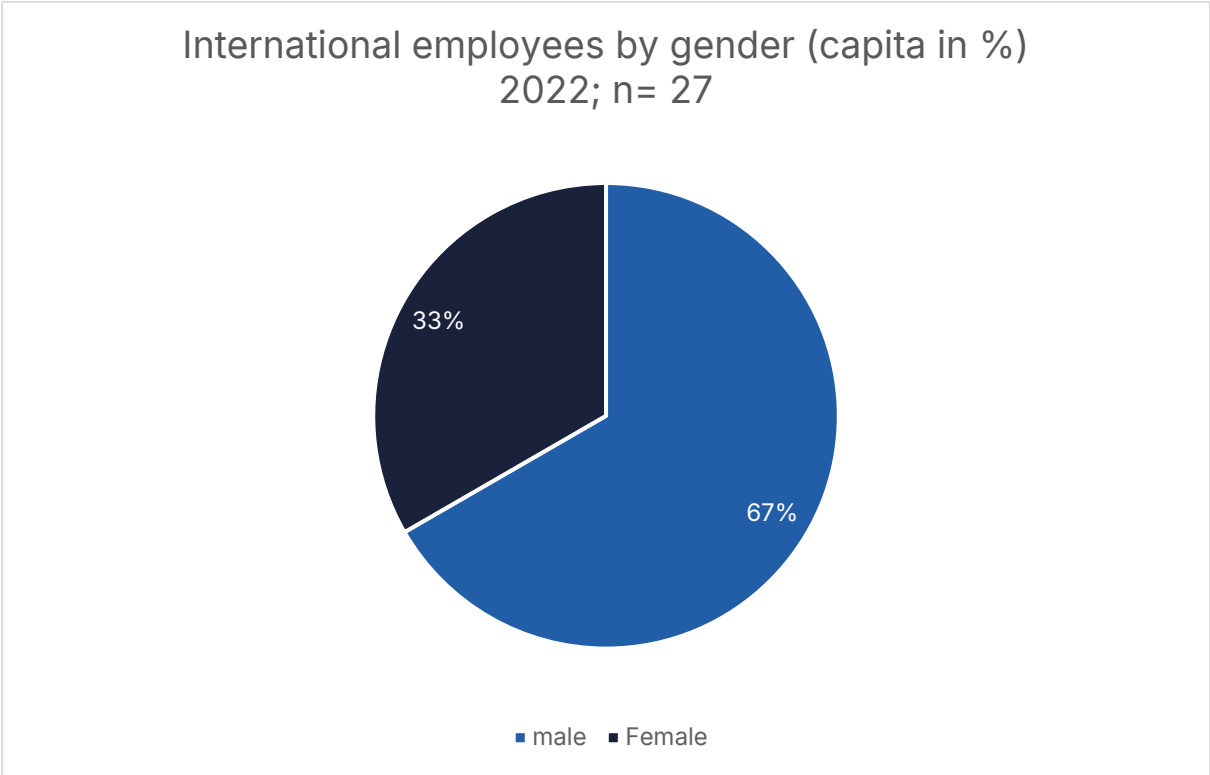
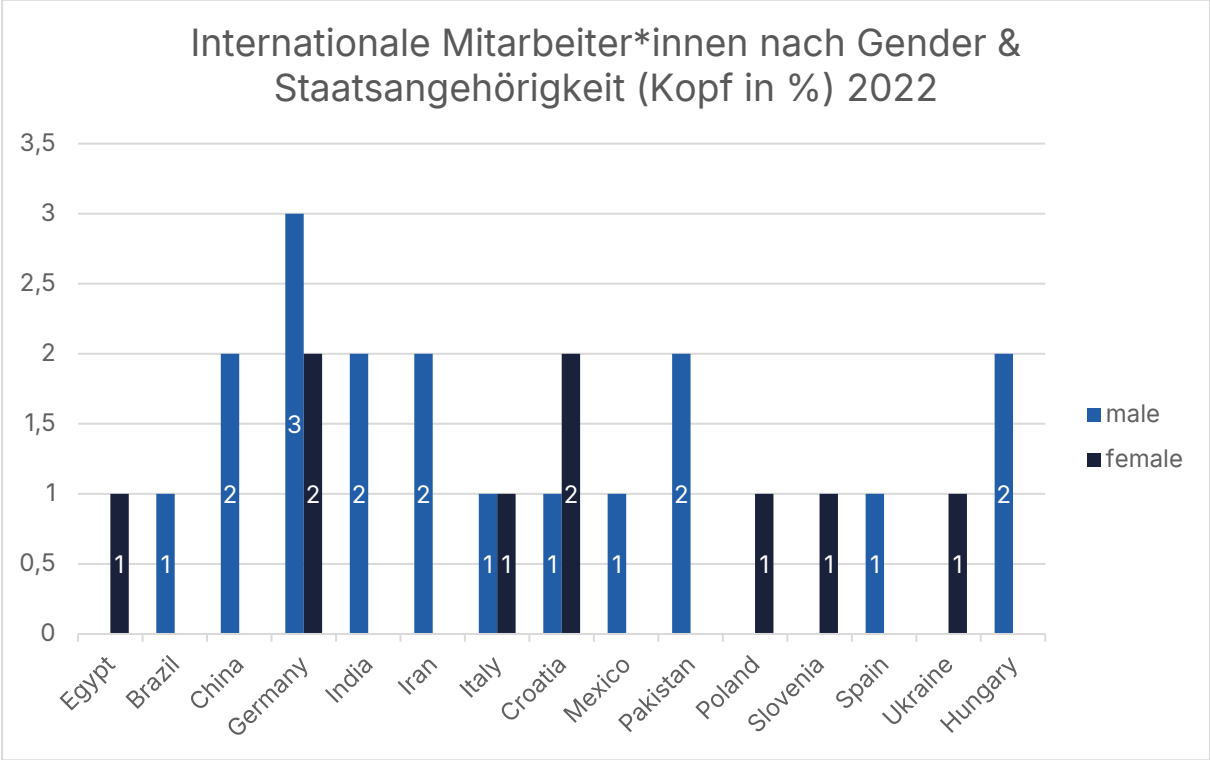


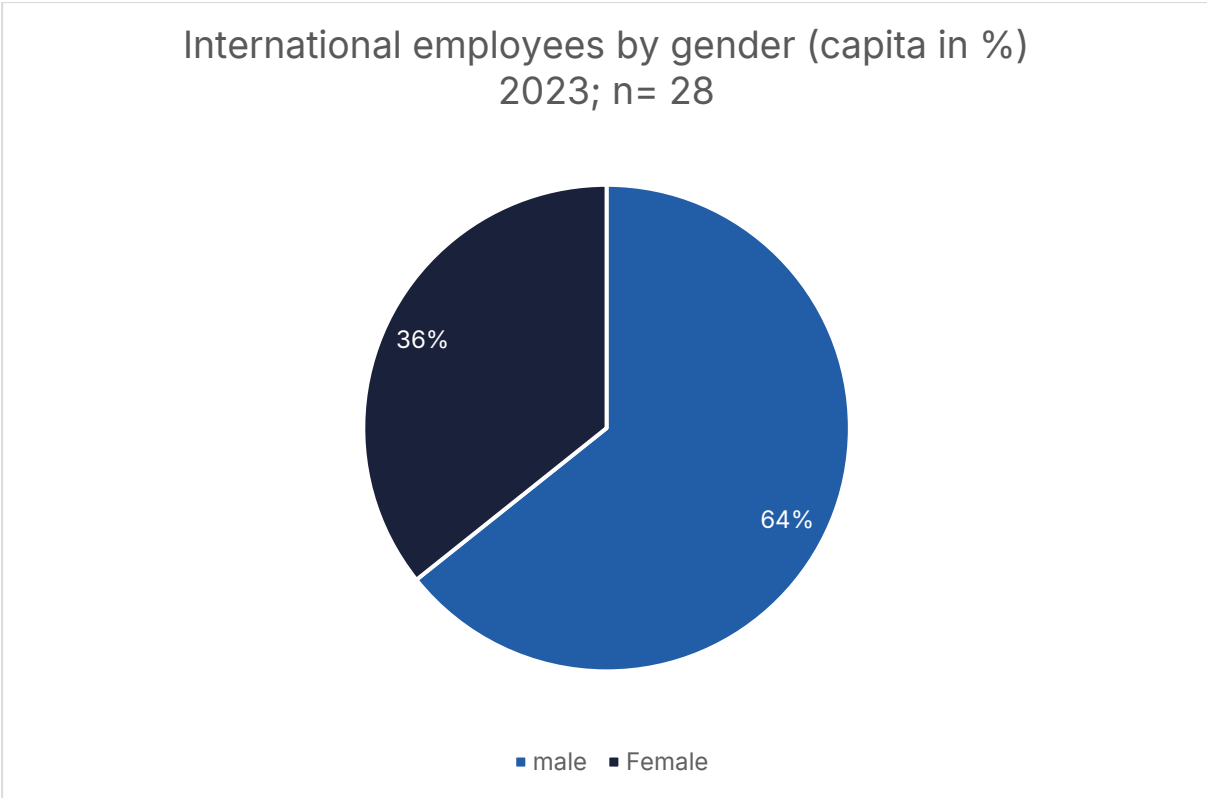
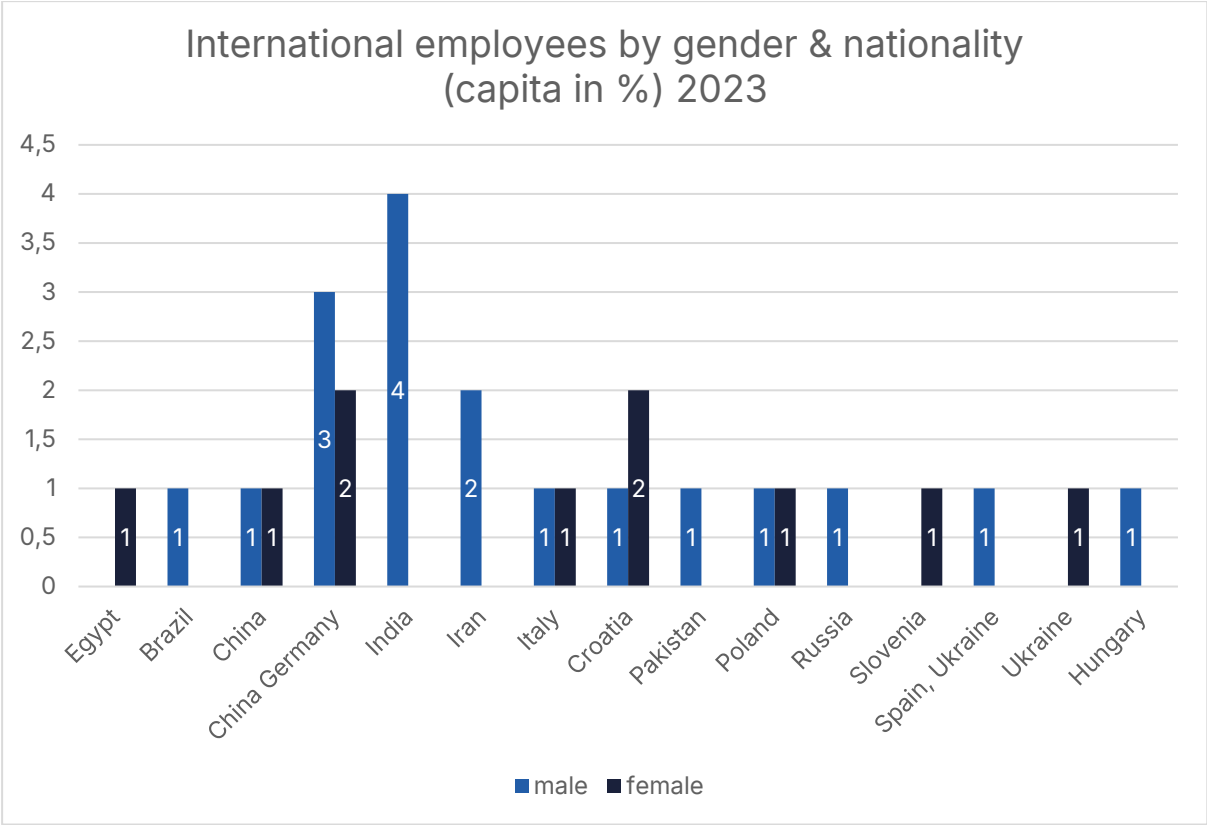


B. Development of employee quotas by gender 2020-2023



C. Distribution of international employees by gender & nationality in 2022 and 2023





D. Development of Leadership by gender in % since 2020-2023

