

# ACTRIS ERIC Gender Equality Plan

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## 1. Introduction and Scope

European Commission defines the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) as a collection of commitments and actions that strive towards promoting gender equality in an organisation through a process of structural change (European Commission 2021a). Gender equality, as well as diversity and inclusion, are important concepts in the workplace as they open the organisation to a wider pool of talented workforce, different perspectives, enhanced collaboration, improved well-being and reputation, and, as a result, organisation's better overall performance. ACTRIS recognises the need for and importance of promoting gender balance and equality throughout the research infrastructure (RI) planning and implementation to stand out as an excellent example of a well-balanced working community.

This document presents gender equality commitments and actions for ACTRIS ERIC, a European research infrastructure and the central hub of the Aerosol, Clouds and Trace Gases Research Infrastructure ACTRIS. This GEP is developed to support the operations of the ACTRIS ERIC, and it follows recommendations set by the European Commission in the "Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans" in 2021. It is important to note that while ACTRIS is a multi-national, distributed research infrastructure involving hundreds of scientific, technical and managerial staff, this GEP concerns only ACTRIS ERIC. ACTRIS ERIC is a small, but diverse organisation, with currently fewer than a dozen employees, with its Head Office in Finland with one unit locating in Italy. The Head Office Unit in Italy has the GEP under the host institution. ACTRIS ERIC recognises that while this GEP concerns only employees of ACTRIS ERIC, all partnering and cooperating institutions and private companies have their own GEPs in place. ACTRIS ERIC also recognises that persons involved within ACTRIS come from various cultural and organisational backgrounds and is aware of the gender-related structures across the wider RI.

It is important to note that while the main purpose of this document is to outline the gender equality aspects of ACTRIS ERIC, this GEP is inherently tied to the overall concepts of equality, diversity, and well-being at work.

ACTRIS ERIC has been established in April 2023, and the staff will start the employment in the Head Office gradually during 2023-2024. Many of the processes described here are under development and will be applied as soon as possible. Hence the document will be updated in 2024.

## 2. Mandatory GEP Requirements

### 2.1 Publication and accessibility

ACTRIS ERIC GEP, presented herein, is openly available on the ACTRIS website.'

### 2.2 Dedicated resources

As an employer, ACTRIS ERIC dedicates the necessary resources for implementing and monitoring the GE through dedicated tasks assigned to the staff and through the occupational health services. ACTRIS ERIC establishes the process for regular discussions and feedback on the GEP related topics as well as other topics related to the well-being of the staff. ACTRIS ERIC develops internal rules and other documents related to the GEP that will also give clear guidelines for the employees if any action should be taken. ACTRIS ERIC organises regular surveys on well-being at work that includes the GEP aspects as well. As ACTRIS ERIC is a

small organisation, care will be taken that the information collected is not in breach with the employees' privacy. GE-related indicators are reported regularly to the ACTRIS ERIC General Assembly and summarised in the future editions of this GEP.

## **2.3 Data collection and monitoring**

ACTRIS ERIC collects data on gender equality through the regular surveys on well-being at work. The gender equality aspects are also followed in the projects that ACTRIS ERIC is coordinating and participating, to ensure equal opportunities for different genders to get involved in the projects and to see different opportunities.

The situation is monitored through the reports presented to the General Assembly. Also, ACTRIS ERIC will have an Ethical Advisory Board which gives feedback and makes recommendations to maintain and develop the ethical aspects of ACTRIS ERIC and ACTRIS as a distributed research infrastructure and supports ACTRIS in development and implementation of ACTRIS ethics policy, that is planned to be approved by the General Assembly in 2024.

It is utmost important to take care that any personal and confidential information is treated according to the applicable data protection legislation.

## **2.4 Training**

ACTRIS ERIC will provide training on gender equality topics mainly through occupational health services. Dedicated trainings can be organised if any issues rise concerning the well-being at work or equality at the workplace, or if the staff proposes any timely topic. ACTRIS ERIC sees important to build a work community where any concerns can be brought up to the supervisor, with assurance that the matter is kept confidential.

## **3. Recommended GEP Requirements**

### **3.1 Work-life balance and organisational culture**

ACTRIS ERIC will develop special processes to support its personnel in various life situations to ensure well-being at and outside of work and a healthy work-life balance. For example, an "early intervention model" will be developed together with the provider of the occupational health services to help the employees in challenging life situations. The working hours will be followed, and action is taken if problems occur. Furthermore, the annual development discussions are used also for regular discussion on the work-life balance. Since the staff of ACTRIS ERIC comes from various backgrounds, special attempts are made to address everyone's individual needs for a healthy work-life balance. While some of the measures directed towards ensuring work-life balance are described in the ACTRIS Staff rules, Finnish legislation related to this topic also applies.

### **3.2 Creating equal working spaces**

ACTRIS ERIC Head Office is currently situated in the premises of Finnish Meteorological Institute.

Working culture has moved more and more to hybrid work. In the simplest terms, hybrid work means that remote work and work at the office can be combined more freely than before, and the utilisation of remote work increases. ACTRIS ERIC Head Office has discussed the staff's views on hybrid work, and guidelines are

being developed based on the feedback from the staff. ACTRIS ERIC is flexible towards hybrid work, where the situation and needs of each staff member is individually discussed and analysed. ACTRIS ERIC supports hybrid work but also takes care, that all personnel can work at the office with good tools and good work ergonomics.

ACTRIS ERIC will follow the impacts of hybrid work, identifies the competence needs required by new working methods and supports needs for well-being at work, and implements related development measures as necessary. Possibility of hybrid work facilitates combining work and life outside of work, increasing the well-being of the staff in many cases.

### **3.3 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making**

As described in more detail in Section 4, ACTRIS has a long-standing tradition of women playing an important role in the leadership and decision-making aspects of the RI, which is expected to continue also within ACTRIS ERIC. During the last two EC funded ACTRIS projects, there has been a healthy balance between men and women in coordination, work package leadership and task leadership roles, which is expected to remain the case also during ACTRIS ERIC operations. In general, ACTRIS ERIC is a small organisation, with fewer than a dozen employees. This means that despite the existing healthy gender balance, large differences in percentages are possible.

### **3.4 Gender equality in recruitment and career development**

ACTRIS ERIC is an equal opportunity employer. ACTRIS ERIC does not tolerate any discrimination against individuals based on their biological sex, identified gender, ethnicity, cultural background, religion, age etc. This is applied to both current employees and during the recruitment process. ACTRIS employment policy and ACTRIS Staff rules describe these principles in more detail.

Uniform and defined recruitment practices clarify the rules of recruitment and support equal and fair recruitment. When hiring new employees, attention is paid to ensuring that recruitments are equal for everyone. Recruitment practices will be examined from the perspective of gender, and qualification requirements and selection criteria are set so that they are effectively equal to everyone.

Regardless of personal characteristics, the most qualified applicant is always selected taking equality and non-discrimination into account.

All employees can advance in their careers. Everyone is guaranteed equal opportunities to develop themselves regardless of their personal characteristics and tasks. For example, regular development discussions, personal development plans, training, job rotation and substitutes are utilised in career planning. The personnel are encouraged to seek more demanding work and new tasks according to their interests.

### **3.5 Promoting equal pay**

Equal pay means that the same task-specific pay is paid for work of equal value, regardless of the employee's personal characteristics. The equality of a position means that the key difficulties, competence, responsibility, workload and working conditions of the work content are of equal value. The professional title does not determine this alone. Personal performance is taken into account in the personal pay component.

New supervisors always receive training on the salary system, and financial constraints, and the matter is also discussed with them in connection with annual development and salary discussions. The basics of the

salary system is also discussed with new hired personnel. When staff know and are able to understand the principles of the system and its constraints, the remuneration criteria remain transparent.

### **3.6 Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment**

ACTRIS ERIC has zero-tolerance for any form of harassment and gender-based violence. The code of conduct, that is under development will give clear advice on preventing such behaviour. An early intervention model will include concrete steps to handle these issues. ACTRIS ERIC staff is encouraged to contact the supervisor with a low threshold with any such concerns.

## **4. Current state of affairs**

ACTRIS ERIC has currently in place ACTRIS employment policy, ACTRIS Staff rules and occupational health procedures with the guidelines for employees.

Prior to and during the establishment of ACTRIS ERIC, ACTRIS was supported by the HORIZON-2020 EC-funded projects, namely the Preparatory Project ACTRIS PPP and Implementation Project ACTRIS IMP. As is customary with EC-funded projects, data on gender dimension are collected routinely as part of the regular reporting. Deliverables ACTRIS PPP D9.8 and ACTRIS IMP D11.7 (both available on the ACTRIS website) present the analysis of the gender balance within the project consortia.

In all, ACTRIS has so far been successful in ensuring that both men and women are given equal opportunities for involvement in various aspects and tasks of the developing RI. ACTRIS PPP and ACTRIS IMP had a healthy balance of men and women involved in all areas of the project operations. Both reports highlight that ACTRIS has been successful in promoting gender balance, involving both men and women equally for different tasks and responsibilities and encouraging a positive change in areas where it is needed. ACTRIS IMP D11.7 also reports that the gender balance of the project consortium compares very well with that of the ACTRIS-adjacent projects. ACTRIS has good traditions in gender balance and women playing a strong role in developing the RI over the years.

## **5. Future development**

The future development surrounding gender balance in ACTRIS will focus on making sure that women are further encouraged to assume research positions and men are given equal opportunities for carrying out technical and administrative tasks in the coming ACTRIS-related projects. As ACTRIS becomes operational as an RI, the gender issue shall be considered in the recruitment of staff for ACTRIS ERIC, Data Centre and Topical Centres, as well as at the National Facilities. More details about this can be found in ACTRIS PPP deliverables D2.7 (ACTRIS staff policy) and D1.4 (Strategy for ACTRIS human resources).

ACTRIS ERIC will continue to monitor the gender balance aspects of its staff both as part of project reporting, as well as part of its annual reporting.

As ACTRIS ERIC has been established this year, 2023, the development of the processes and procedures for fostering, implementing, and monitoring the gender equality is still ongoing. In near future ACTRIS ERIC will develop the required early intervention model (including measures about harassment and bullying at workplace) together with the provider of occupational health services. With the support of the occupational health service provider, the staff well-being surveys will be organised and the results of these will be

discussed with the staff. Any training materials related to the gender equality and diversity will be available for staff after the training.

ACTRIS ERIC will develop procedures for staff development and annual target discussions, in a way that support the GEP and overall well-being at work.

## 6. Gender Dimension and Other Dimensions of Equality

The research field of ACTRIS focuses on physical and chemical phenomena of the atmosphere. These phenomena are not gender-related and, therefore, the concept of gender dimension in research questions is seldom directly applicable.

There are, however, numerous other aspects in ACTRIS where the gender dimension needs to be considered. ACTRIS works on the building of physical access schemes to its Topical Centres and Observational and Exploratory Platforms such that it would allow equal participation of genders as well as equal participation of individuals in other dimensions of equality. It is important that the services built around the facilities enable users and managers in all life situations to be able to work at these prestigious facilities. ACTRIS will also actively support and promote the balance in gender, age, ethnicity, scientific seniority etc. in the technical training of ACTRIS NF and CF operators, managers, and users.

Attention will be given to the gender-dimension aspect and other dimensions of equality when defining the user requirements, identifying, and working with user groups and coordinating internal and external collaborative actions. ACTRIS is aiming to act as a role model in atmospheric research and in the research infrastructure area and to facilitate mentoring and networking opportunities equally. Again, more details about this can be found in ACTRIS PPP deliverables D2.7 (ACTRIS staff policy) and D1.4 (Strategy for ACTRIS human resources).

## 7. References

European Commission (2021a). *Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans*. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/876509> 22.8.2023.

ACTRIS ERIC Employment Policy <https://www.actris.eu/documents/actris-eric-documents>

ACTRIS PPP Deliverable 1.4 Strategy for ACTRIS human resources <https://www.actris.eu/how-are-we-funded/actris-ppp-documents>

ACTRIS PPP Deliverable 2.7 Staff policy <https://www.actris.eu/how-are-we-funded/actris-ppp-documents>

ACTRIS PPP Deliverable 9.8 Analysis of gender balance in ACTRIS <https://www.actris.eu/how-are-we-funded/actris-ppp-documents>

ACTRIS IMP Deliverable 11.7 Analysis of gender balance in ACTRIS <https://www.actris.eu/how-are-we-funded/actris-imp-documents>