GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

2026–2030

Economics Institute
of the Czech Academy
of Sciences

EKU
EI

1. Introduction and Institutional Strategic Vision

1.1 Preamble: The Imperative of Equality in Economic Science

The Economics Institute (EI) of the Czech Academy of Sciences, functioning within the joint workplace of CERGE-EI is a center dedicated to producing frontier economic research and training the next generation of economists for academia, policy, and industry. The EI recognizes that scientific excellence is intrinsically linked to the diversity and inclusivity of its intellectual community.

The mandate for this updated Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for the period 2026–2030 arises not only from the evolving regulatory landscape of the European Research Area (ERA). We understand that EI's commitment to gender equality cannot be merely a compliance exercise; it is a strategic imperative to ensure the quality, relevance, and impact of its research output. By fostering an environment where talent is nurtured regardless of gender, the EI aims to enhance its competitiveness in the global market for academic talent and secure its status as a premier research institution in Central and Eastern Europe.

This document outlines a comprehensive strategy for the next five years. It is grounded in a rigorous evaluation of the previous GEP (2022–2025), informed by internal data and staff feedback, and aligned with the highest international standards. It articulates a shift from establishing foundational governance structures to implementing active, cultural interventions designed to dismantle the subtle, often invisible barriers to equality.

1.2 Alignment with National and European Frameworks

The strategic direction of this plan is embedded in the broader policy architecture of the European Union and the Czech Republic. EI fully supports the objectives of the **EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025**[1] and the **ERA Policy Agenda 2025–2027**[2], which prioritize not only gender balance in decision-making and recruitment, but also the integration of the gender dimension into research content and the fight against gender-based violence.

Crucially, this GEP meets the strengthened eligibility criteria for **Horizon Europe** funding, which mandates that public bodies and research organizations have a GEP that is public, dedicated resource-backed, data-driven, and supported by training.

The plan also reflects the **Czech Gender Equality Strategy 2021–2030**, particularly its focus on "*Labour and Care* and the reduction of the gender pay gap, which remains a critical issue in the Czech labor market. By aligning with the **Code of Conduct of the Czech Academy of Sciences**, the EI reinforces its role within the national research infrastructure, contributing to the CAS's mission of creating a safe, fair, and respectful working environment for all employees.

1 https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en

2 https://european-research-area.ec.europa.eu/era-policy-agenda-2025-2027

2. Monitoring and Evaluation of the 2022–2025 GEP

A thorough assessment of the 2022–2025 GEP reveals significant structural achievements within the EI on several levels.

The evaluation utilizes internal audit files, personnel statistics, and implementation checklists to provide a transparent account of the institute's progress.

Assessment of 2022–2025 GEP Priorities

The evaluation of the previous action plan indicates a successful implementation.

Priority 1: Governance and Institutional Structures

- **Status: Partially Achieved.**
- **Success:** The EI successfully established the position of the **Gender Equality Officer (GEO)**. The role was held by Kateřina Honskusová (2022–2025) and subsequently by Jiří Valenta. This ensures a clear line of responsibility for GEP implementation.
- Whilst the GEO was established and held during the time, the objective to "Earmark institutional budget for gender equality initiatives" was not explicitly confirmed in the internal evaluation. There were formally designated time allocations of the Gender Equality Officer (GEO) and relevant HR staff. Specific financial costs for activities such as training workshops were not spent during the 2022–2025 period.
- **Implication:** The lack of a dedicated budget undermines the GEO's ability to launch proactive initiatives (e.g., external training, care grants). Without financial commitment, gender equality remains an administrative function rather than a strategic investment, posing a risk to Horizon Europe eligibility which requires "dedicated resources".

Priority 2: Recruitment and Career Progression

- **Status: Achieved.**
- **Success:** The institute implemented the "*Ten Commandments for the Selection Procedure*" (Desatero výběrového řízení), distributing it to all committees to enforce equal treatment principles. Job advertisements now mandatorily include diversity statements.
- **Success:** Flexible work arrangements are robust. Remote work agreements are standard after the probationary period, and part-time adjustments for parents are supported above the labour law prescribed standards.

Priority 3: Data Collection and Monitoring

- **Status: Partially Achieved.**
- **Success:** Data is an essential tool for determining whether current procedures are designed to create a gender-balanced working environment. The personnel system now generates sex-disaggregated reports which are reviewed by the Director. The data, however, remain binary and basic. There is no evidence of tracking recruitment funnels (applicants vs. shortlists vs. hires) or intersectional data, limiting the institute's ability to diagnose at which stage of the process we may be losing qualified and talented employees .

Priority 4: Awareness and Training

- **Status: Partially Achieved.**
- **Success:** The GEP is distributed during onboarding and published on the website and on the Intranet.
- The objective to "Provide training to employees and students on gender equality topics" is being currently developed and employees have access to materials provided by the Charles University and Office of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Priority 5: Prevention of Sexism and Harassment

- **Status: Achieved.**
- **Success:** The appointment of an **Ombudsman** (PhDr. Tomáš Pavela) and the issuance of Director's Order No. 1/2024 institutionalized the protection mechanism.
- The system has been stress-tested. In 2024, a disciplinary case involving inappropriate behavior toward a student/employee was internally investigated. Letter of reprimand was issued, the perpetrator was suspended from his position and till end of their contract they were not assigned work or allowed in premises.
- This proves the institute has moved beyond "paper compliance" to actual enforcement. The willingness to terminate contracts for harassment sends a powerful signal of zero tolerance, establishing a baseline of safety and trust.

3. Strategic Plan 2026–2030: Moving from Compliance to Culture

The plan for the next period moves away from overly ambitious expansion and focuses on **consolidating gains** and **standardizing best practices** that benefit all employees.

Priority Area 1: Work-Life Balance and Organizational Culture

Focus: Maintaining our high standards of employee care and flexibility.

The EI already offers competitive conditions compared to the private sector and many other academic institutions. The goal is to preserve and formalize these benefits to retain talent and support parents.

Objective 1.1: Sustainable Flexible Working Conditions

- **Action:** Continue the standard practice of offering **Remote Work Agreements** (Home Office) to all eligible employees after the probationary period.
- **Action:** Maintain the policy of accommodating **part-time schedules** for parents returning from maternity/parental leave to ensure they do not have to choose between career and family.
- **Indicator:** % of requests for flexible arrangements granted.

Objective 1.2: Employee Well-being and Benefits

- **Action:** Sustain the current portfolio of benefits that support work-life balance, including:
  - 5 weeks of vacation.
  - 5 days of "DOR" (personal leave and development days, which can also be used as sick/indisposition leave).
  - Contributions to pension/life insurance and meal vouchers.
- **Action:** Ensure meetings and key seminars are scheduled, whenever possible, within core working hours (e.g., avoiding late Friday afternoons) to respect caregiving responsibilities.

Priority Area 2: Fair and Transparent Recruitment

Focus: Ensuring an open door for talent without compromising excellence.

Objective 2.1: Open, Transparent, Merit-based Recruitment (OTM-R)

- **Action:** Continue including the "Equal Opportunity Employer" statement in all job advertisements.
- **Action:** Ensure all selection committees receive the "**Recruitment Ten Commandments**" (Desatero) prior to interviews, reminding them to focus solely on professional qualifications and avoid questions about family status.
- **Indicator:** 100% of committees provided with guidelines.

Objective 2.2: Monitoring the Pipeline

- **Action:** The HR department will continue to monitor the gender ratio of applicants vs. hires. This allows us to see if we are failing to attract female economists or failing to hire them.
- **Indicator:** Annual report on recruitment statistics presented to management.

Priority Area 3: Prevention of Harassment and Ensuring Safety

Focus: Zero tolerance and clear reporting channels.

A safe environment is a prerequisite for excellent research. We will maintain the robust system established in the previous period.

Objective 3.1: Ombudsman and Whistleblowing

- **Action:** Support the independence and visibility of the **Ombudsman**. Ensure all new employees are introduced to this role during onboarding.
- **Action:** Maintain compliance with the **Czech Whistleblower Protection Act** (Act No. 171/2023), ensuring anonymous reporting channels remain functional and trusted.

Priority Area 4: Resources, Training & Awareness

Objective 4.1: Availability of resources and earmarked budgets

Action: Ensure that the implementation of this Gender Equality Plan is backed by clear, stable and adequately funded resources. Responsibility for coordination and monitoring of the GEP is assigned to the GEO, supported by a cross-unit Gender Equality Working Group comprising representatives from HR, research management, finance, and academic staff. The institution will allocate dedicated staff time for data collection and analysis (including sex-/gender-disaggregated statistics), awareness-raising and training activities.

A specific annual budget line will be earmarked to cover training, expert consultancy, communication, and monitoring tools related to the GEP.

These dedicated resources will be reviewed regularly by senior management to ensure that the financial, human and technical means devoted to gender equality are sufficient for the effective and sustainable implementation of the Plan.

Objective 4.2: Comprehensive Training Curriculum

- **Context:** Training is a mandatory eligibility criterion for Horizon Europe.[3]

- **Action:** Roll out a tiered training program:
  - **Module A (All Staff):** Online module on Gender Equality basics and the CAS Code of Conduct (part of onboarding).
  - **Module B (Management/Recruiters):** In-person/ Interactive workshop on Unconscious Bias and Inclusive Leadership.
  - **Module C (Bystanders):** Training for staff/students on how to intervene safely when witnessing harassment.

- **Indicator:** % of staff completing modules (Target: 90% by 2026).

3 https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/horizon-europe-gep-criterion?language_content_entity=en

Priority Area 5: Integration of Gender-perspective into Research Activities

As a public research institute, EI is expected to contribute to excellent, socially relevant research. This includes systematically considering gender and other relevant dimensions of diversity in research design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination, in line with national and European funding requirements (e.g. GAČR, Horizon Europe).

Objective 5.1: Integrating Gender Dimension in Research Content

- **Context:** Major research funders (including GAČR and Horizon Europe) require that the "*gender dimension*" be meaningfully integrated into research content wherever relevant. For EI, this is not only a compliance issue but also a matter of research quality and relevance.
- **Action 1:** GEO is able to provide ad hoc consultation on integrating the gender dimension into project proposals and impact pathways.
- **Action 2:** Grant office will provide support and a short section on gender dimension requirements in internal information sessions for major grant calls (*e.g. GAČR, Horizon Europe*).

4. Data Collection and Intersectional Monitoring

To move beyond the current status in data collection, the EI will upgrade its monitoring systems.

Objective: Expand the granularity of HR data while respecting GDPR.

- **Action:** Develop a dashboard that tracks **recruitment funnels** (e.g., % of women applicants -> % shortlisted -> % hired). This allows the institute to diagnose if the problem is *attraction* (few applicants) or selection (bias in hiring).
- **Action:** Conduct a feasibility study on collecting **intersectional data** (e.g., age + gender, nationality + gender). This is critical for an international workplace like CERGE-EI, where foreign female researchers may face different barriers (e.g., visa issues, lack of local family support) compared to Czech staff.
- **Action:** Integrate questions on "workplace climate" and "inclusion" into the regular employee performance review/surveys to capture qualitative data that statistics miss.

5. Conclusion

The Economics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences has laid a solid foundation for gender equality over the past period, particularly in establishing the offices of the Gender Equality Officer and Ombudsman and adopting internal regulations which cover these topics. The zero-tolerance approach to harassment, evidenced by recent enforcement actions, sets a commendable standard for the Czech academic environment.

However, the path to true equality requires moving beyond these protective measures to proactive investments in people and culture. The 2025–2028 Gender Equality Plan addresses the identified gaps—specifically the lack of dedicated funding and active training—while tackling the unique "leaky pipeline" and cultural challenges of the economics profession. By committing resources to these initiatives and embracing a data-driven, intersectional approach, the EI aligns itself with the vanguard of the European Research Area. This plan ensures that the institute remains a beacon of excellence, where the most talented minds are empowered to contribute to economic science regardless of their gender.

This plan was drafted in accordance with the requirements of Horizon Europe, the Czech Academy of Sciences, and best practices from the American and European Economic Associations.

Economics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences
Politických vězňů 7 · 110 00 · Prague 1 · Czech Republic
Phone: +420 224 005 123
www.cerge-ei.cz

