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Gender Equality Plan

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1 Introduction

It is not only nature that is subject to constant change. Society and the working environment are also constantly changing. In both nature and society, diversity is key to future success. The Swiss Ornithological Institute (SOI) employs people of different genders with different professional backgrounds, people who speak different languages and come from different countries. Bringing together and promoting these different experiences and values is a prerequisite for providing an exciting and successful working environment.

The SOI is committed to an equality-oriented and non-discriminatory working environment and has been able to lay the foundations for this in recent years with various measures. By adopting a Gender Equality Plan (GEP), the Foundation Board and the Directorate are committed to strengthening this development and thus, to implementing the legal basis and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda with its 17 goals for sustainable development.

The principles and measures set out in this GEP are not considered to be exhaustive. This is because topics such as equality, diversity and inclusion must be monitored and continuously developed. Thus, the GEP committee will work on further measures of various diversity dimensions (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, languages, nationalities, neurodiversity) and will update sections in the coming years.

For this to succeed, cooperation is needed at all levels. The objectives of the GEP and the planned measures and offerings must be clearly communicated and disseminated. Only in this way will it be possible to maintain the necessary awareness of the issues associated with the GEP.

The Foundation Board and the Directorate have adopted this GEP and are committed to its implementation.

2 The Swiss Ornithological Institute

The SOI is a private, non-profit foundation dedicated to the study and conservation of birds. Its primary tasks include monitoring of the distribution, abundance and status of bird species occurring in Switzerland, conducting scientific studies on the ecology and migration of species and improving living conditions for threatened species as well as reporting findings to key stakeholders, policymakers and the public. In addition, the Institute also promotes public engagement with bird-related themes and inspires people to take delight in birdlife. The Institute implements these tasks through research, conservation, education and outreach. Its activities are carried out within the four domains of research, conservation, administration and public relations.

The SOI is governed by a Foundation Board of 7–13 members, responsible for strategic and financial planning and overall development. The Board appoints a Scientific Advisory Board of at least five members and external experts to evaluate scientific work and support strategic planning. Neither board has employment ties to the Institute.

The Directorate, composed of heads of research, conservation, administration, and public relations, implements the Institute's mission. It is supported by administrative and scientific units; the head of scientific support attends weekly meetings as a non-voting guest.

3 Current state at the SOI

3.1 Concept definitions

We must recognize that the SOI does currently not differentiate between sex and gender in administrative records. Therefore, all information shared in this document will reflect this lack in detail by referring to the registered sex of employees.

1. **Sex:** here, we define the sex of a person as the biological sex a person is born as, which can include, but is not limited to male, female, and intersexual.
2. **Gender:** a person's gender is defined as the psychological and cultural norm a person identifies as, including, but not limited to male, female, and non-binary.

The GEP of the SOI recognizes that diversity, equality, and inclusivity on the work floor is a multifaceted issue, which is not easily captured in simple statistics. We plan to collect regularly anonymous information on a voluntary basis about diversity, equality, and inclusion.

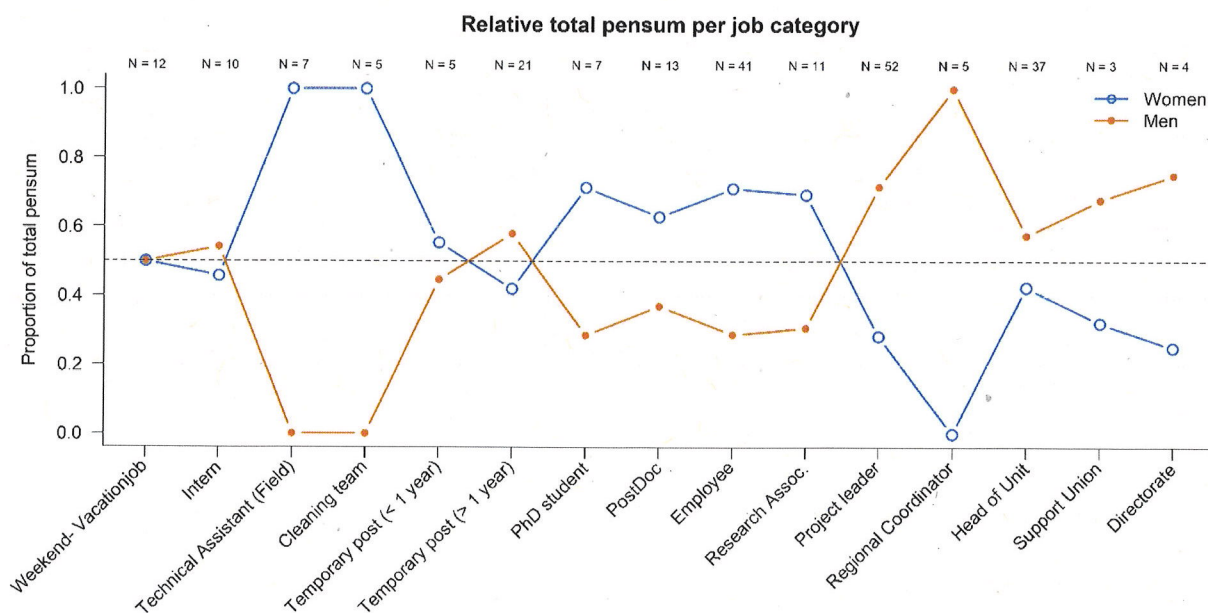
Below, we describe the actions currently done by the SOI to address gender equality and diversity at the Institute. After that, we propose improvements to existing actions, and suggest new actions which would actively address diversity, equality, and inclusion issues at the SOI.

3.2 Statistics from the SOI

Here, we present data collected by HR when a person engages in a contract with the SOI. So far, the data reflects the situation at the SOI as of 31 December 2025. In alignment of the current law (Cst Art 8.3), the statistics gathered here show only differences between male and female.

By the end of 2025, a total of 233 persons had been employed. Of these, 121 registered as women and 112 as men (currently, no other options are allowed in the system, and a choice is required). Across the Institute, 78 women and 81 men have currently permanent positions. The data analyzed in the context of gender equality and presented in the graphs is systematically collected by the HR unit.

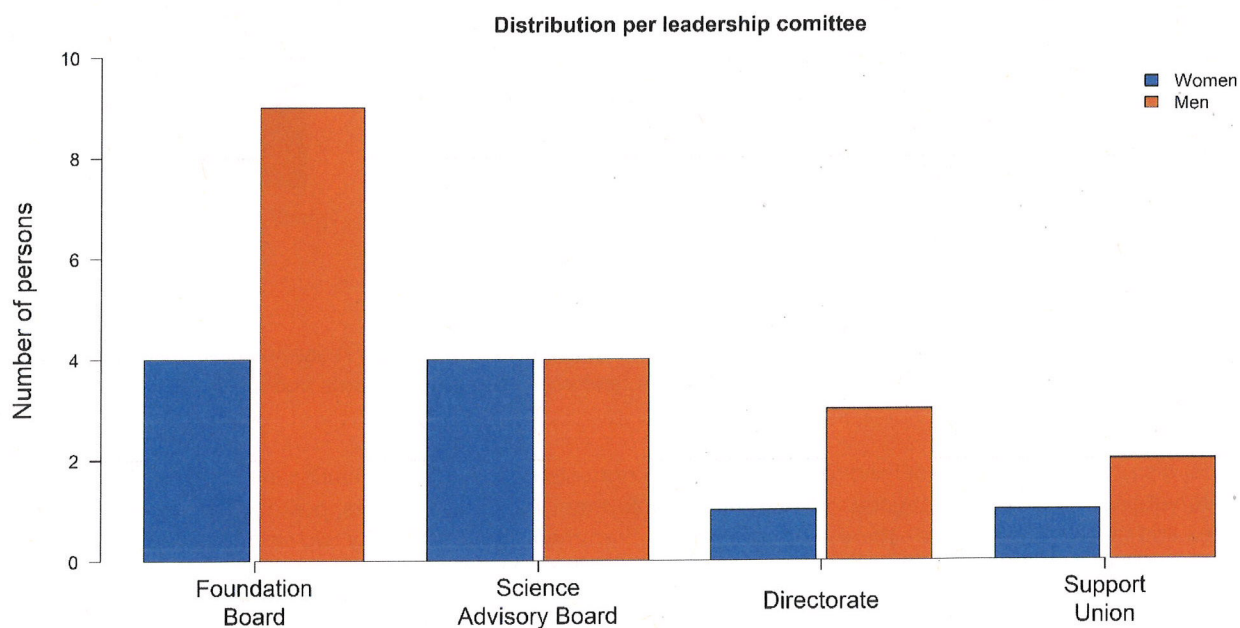
This figure below shows what is known as 'the leaky pipeline'. It shows the distribution of women and men in each job position recognized by SOI policy. The figure shown relative total pensum, in other words, the number of working hours spent by all employees in each position (not just number of people per job position), transformed to sum to 100 %. The job positions have been ordered from left to right with increasing responsibility and decision power within the SOI, which also roughly corresponds to the position's average net wage (i.e., higher wages towards the right of the figure). The number of people employed in each position is given at the top of the figure (N).



3.2.1 Foundation Board, Scientific Advisory Board, Directorate and associated support

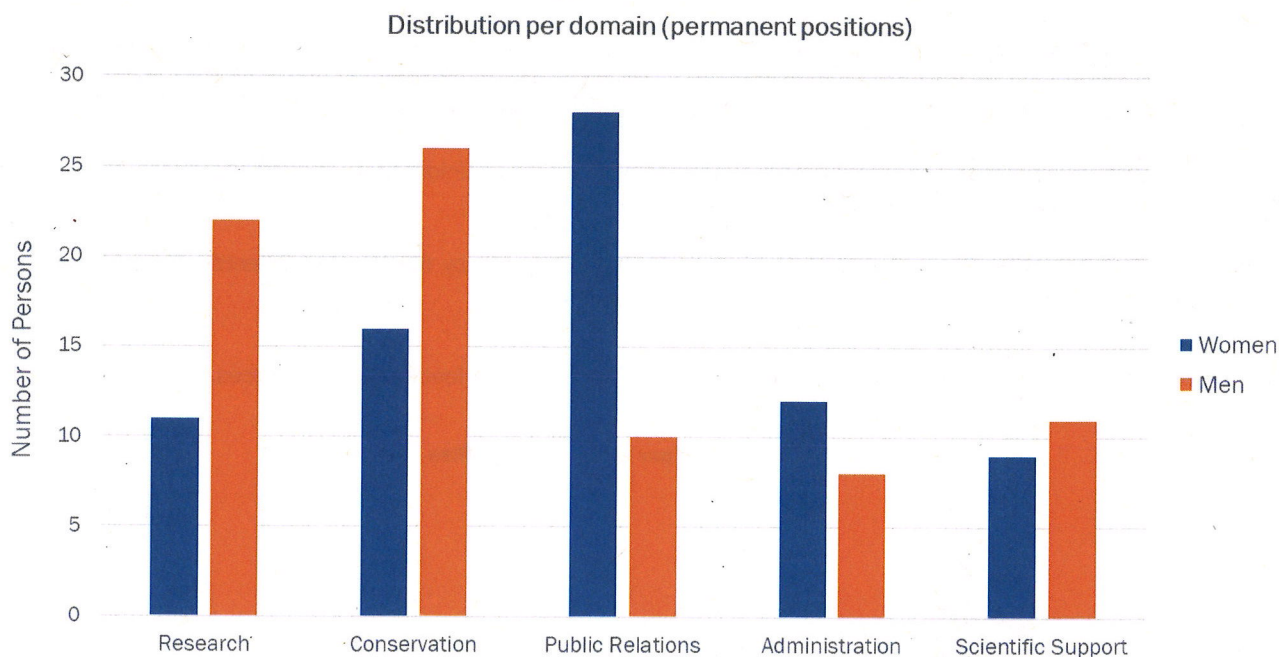
- 1) **The Foundation Board (Stiftungsrat, SR):** the highest committee of the Institute. It currently consists of four women and nine men.
- 2) **The Scientific Advisory Board (Wissenschaftliche Kommission, WIKO):** currently consists of four women and four men.
- 3) **Institute Directorate (Institutsleitung, IL):** one woman and three men are represented on the Directorate. From January 2026, the Conservation domain will be led by a co-management team consisting of one woman and one man, thus two women and three men will form the Directorate.
- 4) **Support Union (Stab):** The Directorate is supported by the Support Union (Stab) in numerous tasks. The Support Union team consists of two employees: one man and one woman.
- 5) **Head of Scientific Support:** The Directorate is further supported by the Head of Scientific Support, which is currently a man.

In the figure below, we show the number of women and men in each of these leadership committees.



3.2.2 Distribution per domain (permanent positions)

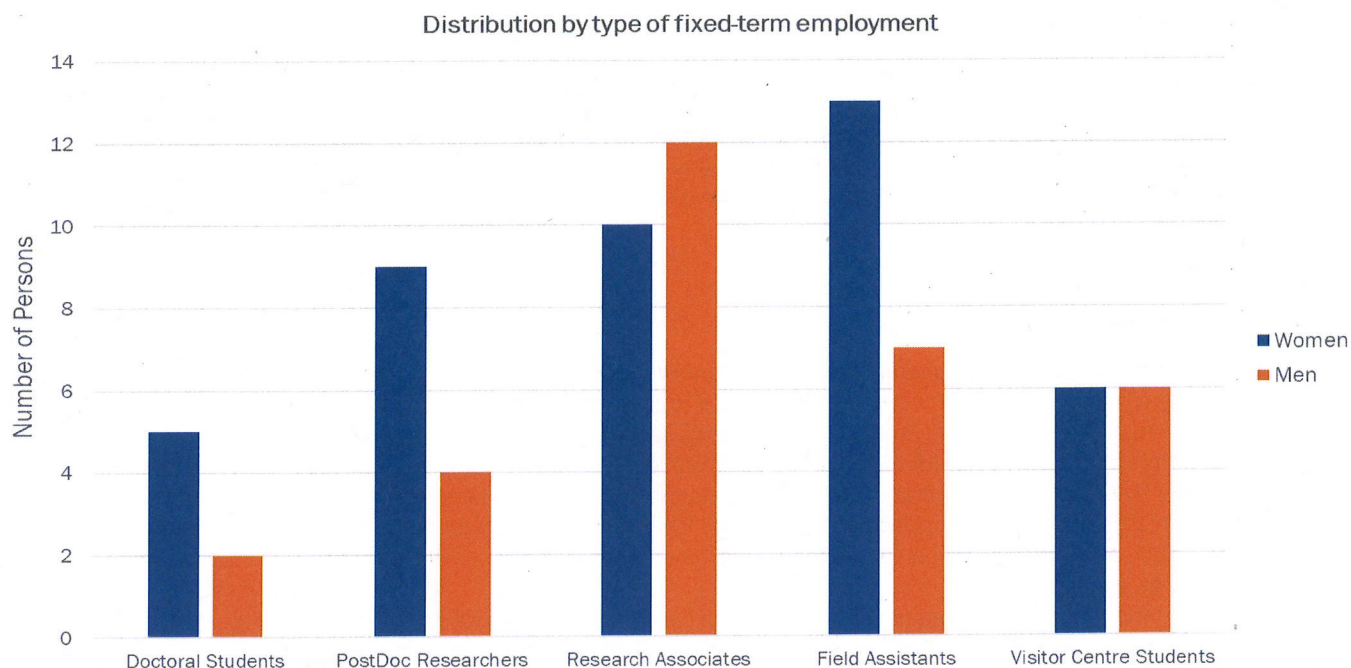
A comparison of the sex ratio in permanent positions in the four domains and in scientific support reveals differences between the domains. While the number of women is higher in public relations and administration, substantially more men than women work in research and conservation. In scientific support, there is only a slight difference between the genders.



3.2.3 Distribution by type of fixed-term employment

Fixed-term contracts are particularly common in research and conservation projects. These include doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers and research associates as well as fieldwork assistants, interns and weekend shifts students working in the visitor centre.

The gender distribution at the time of fixed-term employment contrasts with gender distribution in the domains of research and conservation. In almost all categories of fixed-term employment (doctoral students, postdoc researchers, research associates and fieldwork assistants), there are more women than men, whereas in only two categories (interns and students at the visitor centre), the gender ratio is balanced.

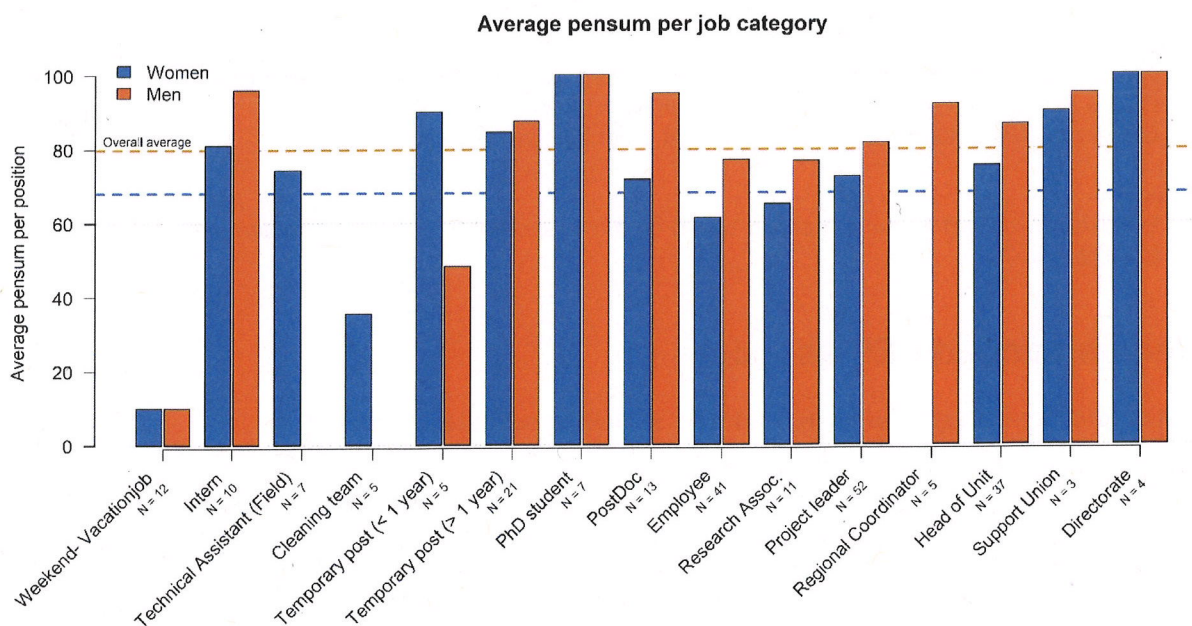


3.2.4 Workload distribution by gender and domain (for permanent positions)

Women work at lower percentages of full-time equivalent positions than men. Of the seven permanent employees working less than 40 % of full-time hours, five are women. Seventeen people work less than 60 % of full-time hours, including only one man. Seventeen women and ten men work less than 80 % of full-time hours.

Ninety-seven employees work in the 80 to 100 % category, comprising 37 women and 60 men.

The figure below shows the average pensum (i.e., workload, in percent) for women and men in each job title category. This shows, for example, that both male and female PhDs all have a 100 % workload, but that female temporary employees (< 1 year) have – on average – a higher pensum than male employees in that category. It also shows that in 2025, only female technical assistants were hired. The dotted lines reflect the overall average across all employees.



4 GEP Actions

4.1 Publication

This annually updated GEP will be published on the homepage of the SOI and communicated to all staff members. The Foundation Board and the Directorate have adopted this GEP and are committed to its implementation, as underpinned by their signatures at the end of this document. On an annual basis, the GEP will be supplemented by an annual progress report.

4.2 Dedicated resources

In the last quarter of 2025, a first committee has been formed to implement and review the measures mentioned below as well as gain an oversight of the annual reporting and further developments needed. The committee consists of five members from different domains, various native language backgrounds, and functions within the Institute. The committee members have been identified with their various experiences with EDI-topics. The committee members will meet regularly to discuss progress and implementations as well as improvements in the measures. The information on current members of the committee and their experience will be shared on the GEP website but are subject to change over time. Other resources such as an Equity Diversity Inclusion (EDI) Officer (appointed or elected) and with or without a (smaller) committee need to be evaluated.

The SOI commits to making an annual budget and dedicated resources available for the committee to ensure the continuous implementation of the GEP. Specifics will be, as with all other projects and resources, discussed on an annual basis and made available following the budget approval by the Foundation Board in December.

4.3 Training

For 2026, it is planned to carry out two half-day workshops in cooperation with the Competence Center for Diversity, Disability and Inclusion (CCDI), University of St. Gallen (HSG) specifically for unit leaders and the human resources team on unconscious biases during the recruitment process. Furthermore, all staff will have the chance to attend lunchtime seminars on unconscious biases to raise awareness.

Commitment

The SOI regularly offers internal lunchtime colloquia, internal information events and lunch learning sessions, which are open to all employees for professional and personal development.

Implementation

- » Plan and carry out workshops and lunchtime seminars with external providers e.g. CCDI.
- » Ensure that staff mentioned in chapter 4.2 will have the necessary qualifications.
- » Encourage staff to take part in training at their other host institution(s).

Measures

- » Evaluate topics and follow-up options based on surveys, other internal stakeholders and/or outcome of initial training in 2026.

5 Recommended GEP aspects

5.1 Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

The SOI is aware that various aspects of its work, in particular fieldwork, can lead to particularly risky situations, over and beyond general risks of discrimination and harassment. During the mission statement review process in 2025, the Institute recognized the importance of introducing a zero-tolerance policy against all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, in alignment with its mission and values. This policy will be supported by the establishment of a clear and effective Code of Conduct, along with the necessary procedures and measures to ensure its effective implementation.

Commitment

The SOI is committed to fostering a safe and respectful environment by adopting a zero-tolerance policy toward all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

Implementation

- » Promote an institutional culture based on respect, transparency, and zero tolerance for any form of harassment.
- » Raise awareness and identify issues and situations that may lead to discriminatory/ sexist behavior or harassment.
- » Make the Institute a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for all, including through an ombudsperson and/or an established reporting and support system (e.g. also anonymously/ suggestion box)
- » Ensure leadership at all levels actively supports respectful and inclusive behavior.
- » Define clear roles and responsibilities for all types of measures.
- » Implement/define preventive and response measures.
- » Monitor, evaluate and adapt the measures based on their performance.

Measures

1. Code of Conduct

- » Engage the Institute to establish a Code of Conduct that reinforces our commitment to respect, inclusivity, and zero tolerance for harassment.
- » Define disciplinary measures for violations of the Code of Conduct.
- » Ensure leadership actively supports respectful and inclusive behavior by assigned, specific roles and responsibilities.

2. Reporting and Support Systems

- » Establish clear procedures for reporting and responding to incidents of harassment or discrimination, including for an investigation process if needed.
- » Assign contact persons to serve as points of support, including the ombudsperson as main coordinator.
- » Provide confidential psychological and legal support via the designated trusted person.

3. Awareness and Training

- » Raise awareness among all staff, including field managers and supervisors, about their responsibilities, for example by inclusion in the annual appraisal form.
- » Offer seminars for interns presenting Institute policies, data findings, and measures to prevent harassment.
- » Provide specialized training for leadership, supervisors, and field coordinators on recognizing, preventing, and addressing harassment or discrimination.

4. Identify Risk Situations and Preventive Measures

- » Assess fieldwork, organizational practices, and team dynamics for situations that may lead to harassment or discriminatory behavior.
- » Develop protocols, support structures, and training programs tailored to fieldwork and institutional settings.

5. Measures to increase Comfort and Inclusivity

- » Ensure field assignments are planned so no participant is isolated without access to support.
- » Provide clear communication channels for field staff to report concerns or request assistance at any time.
- » Promote mentorship or buddy systems for underrepresented groups in the field.

6. Data Collection and Evaluation

- » Use questionnaires to collect anonymized data on how comfortable employees and volunteers of SOI currently feel in the working environment, including experiences of gender-based harassment and violence.
- » Assess weaknesses/gaps and prioritize areas for improvement.
- » Monitor implementation progress through regular feedback from staff and participants.
- » Use evaluations for continuous improvement by refining policies, training programs, and preventive measures, ensuring ongoing alignment with the Institute's mission and values.
- » Assign responsibility to the committee to monitor compliance and serve as contact.

5.2 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Increasing the proportion of women in management positions (Foundation Board, Directorate and Unit Heads) is a key concern for the Directorate and the Foundation Board. The aim is to work towards a fair representation of gender in all committees at SOI. Establishing the procedures needs to be developed.

Due to the low staff turnover rate at the Institute, this transformation process will be implemented gradually over time as appropriate opportunities occur.

Implementation

- » Revising the descriptions of leadership boards and committees (e.g. Scientific Advisory Board, Foundation Board, Directorate) by clearly defining the criteria for the composition of boards and committees, including professional expertise, subject-matter competence, and gender dimension.

5.3 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Job advertisements are written in a gender-neutral manner and with diversity in mind. To attract the attention of as many people as possible to vacant positions, these are published on various platforms, social media and existing networks. Applications received are always reviewed by a recruitment team whose members are as gender-balanced as possible. This ensures that decisions made during the process are broadly supported. In general, the recruitment team decides whether to fill the position or issue a second advertisement. For special recruitments such as domain directors, unit heads or cross-functional jobs, additional parties will be involved.

Salary classification is based on the tasks and responsibility associated with the position and the corresponding job description. The unit human resources classifies the person on the basis of the salary regulations and the associated explanations.

The SOI is committed to supporting the development of its employees, regardless of their function. Applications for further training can be submitted within the budget, but also during the year by both employees and supervisors. Participation in conferences is also supported and carried out in accordance to internal directives.

Access to the remuneration regulations means that supervisors and employees are familiar with the promotion process and can use this information to submit an application to the Directorate if a person's function or job description expands significantly.

When an employee leaves the SOI, the human resources unit conducts a standard exit interview. This ensures that any discrimination is identified and the necessary measures can be taken.

Commitment

Support the development of its employees, foster transparency and ensure information workflow about directives and standard procedures.

Implementation

- » Critically reflect on current job-advertisement, on- and offboarding processes.
- » Set-up career progression information.
- » Establish the career progression and application process and inform about it regularly.
- » Regular meetings with representative(s) of the GEP committee, HR (and the Directorate) for evaluation and exchange about DEI related topics.
- » Raise awareness for special funding opportunities.
- » Review the directive on conference attendances.
- » Evaluate the current young talent promotions (youth camps, national future day).
- » Develop a mentorship program.

Measures

- » The SOI analyses wage equality regularly within its administration and shares the results with all staff.
- » Encourage activities and events organized that promote diversity and inclusion, e.g. diversity-day, women's day celebration.
- » (Re-)evaluate the job-advertisement process (language bias, recruitment team, re-advertisement rule if none of the underrepresented gender applies, proactive search for candidates).
- » Coordinating with the grants officer to seek new funding opportunities for specific cases (young parents, young female scientists, travel grants etc.).
- » Working towards a fair representation of gender for committees (e.g. speaker, panelist, session chair, organizing committee members, recruitment panels).

- » Evaluate and inform about escalation levels with the human resource unit.
- » Evaluate yearly feedback from our ombudsperson's office about raised topics.

5.4 Work-life balance and organisational culture

The SOI helps employees balance work and personal life through a variety of measures. Thanks to a modern IT infrastructure that enables employees to work from different locations, a liberal home office policy, an annual working time model that allows overtime to be compensated, and the adjustment of the workload twice a year, employees can react flexibly to changing personal circumstances.

The SOI also allows employees to take unpaid leave. This option can also be used following maternity or paternity leave. Prior to parental leave, any changes to working hours and duties are discussed and agreed with the employees concerned. The aim is to enable these employees to return to work or to offer them other suitable work.

Work-life balance is further enhanced by the fact that positions, with few exceptions, can be filled on a part-time basis, including in management. From 2026, a co-management model will be introduced at the Directorate, further opening up management models.

A relaxation room is available for all employees, which can be used by young mothers to do care work, while staff may use it for breaks between tasks in order to reduce stress and foster better mental wellbeing. The room, however, is not meant to be used for meetings due to lack of room availability.

Implementation

- » Where possible, meetings and events will be scheduled so they do not collide with day care drop-off and pick-up times (c.f. Vision 6.d, Sustainability group goal)
- » The SOI is examining what other kinds of measures can be taken to improve the work-life balance of its employees.

5.5 Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

The SOI is aware that insufficient inclusion of the gender dimension can bias findings and conclusions in its core areas of expertise. Examples include studies on bird song that are generally biased towards male vocalizations, use of visual materials that are biased towards showing male birds, or underestimation of sex-specific physiological effects of pollutants.

Commitment

Conscious of these and other biases, the SOI fosters high-quality, socially relevant science, and promotes sex/gender inclusive research practices.

Implementation

- » Critically reflect on, and explicitly define, concepts and assumptions in research from a gender perspective.
- » Re-evaluate the formulation of research questions and arising research practices.
- » Develop methodologies to integrate gender dimension into research.
- » Integration of the gender dimension into each stage of research planning, including budgeting.
- » As some employees are involved in university teaching, implement the above in gender-inclusive teaching content; equally, use SOI's public outreach and interaction with citizen scientists to inform on, and engage with, the gender dimension in research.

Measures

1. Evaluate concepts, assumptions and practice

- » Jointly collect case-studies of gender-biased assumptions and practice within units, collectively perform gender impact assessment process of research and conservation projects.
- » Invite speakers (Colloquium, Training) who present gender-conscious research and diverse views.
- » Organize training and workshops to raise awareness.
- » Reflect on the gender dimension in internal and external projects with persons that represent all genders (not only leaders).

- » Monitor the gender dimension implementation: improve the process if problems or adaptations needed; e.g., dedicated annual review by representatives from all research groups, and annual agenda point for the research domain meeting.

2. Redefine research practices where deficiencies are detected

- » Guidelines on integrating gender perspectives into design, analysis, and reporting; include section on gender dimension in project proposals.
- » Methodological resources (checklists, templates, guidelines...) for researchers to support and access the integration of gender-sensitive approaches in projects.
- » Use of inclusive and unbiased language in all publications and presentations.

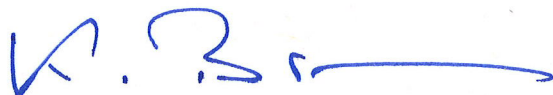
3. Explicitly develop examples and teaching content

- » Effective presentation of gender-specific research results.

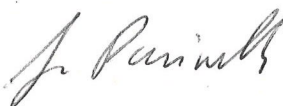
VERSION 1.0 AS OF 15.04.2026

Responsibilities and implementation

Responsibility for the operational implementation of the GEP lies with the committee. The project leader submits an annual report on the status of gender equality at the SOI to the Directorate. The GEP measures can be continuously developed by the committee with the approval of the Directorate. Legitimate stakeholders within the SOI will be involved in this process.



Dr Kurt Bollmann
President of the Foundation Board



Dr Gilberto Pasinelli
Chairman of the Directorate

6 Annex

Existing documents relating to equal opportunities

The Swiss Ornithological Institute (SOI) strives to establish appropriate guidelines (e.g. manuals, directives, regulations). References to equal opportunities can currently be found in the following documents:

Document	Obligation	Reference
Personnel Regulations 2024	The SOI is committed to pursuing an open socially minded human resources policy. Employment positions are open to everyone regardless of gender, origin, religion or other personal characteristics. Personal privacy and equal opportunities are protected. Equal opportunities and diversity The SOI promotes equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion for all its employees. It protects the dignity of all employees and raises awareness of these issues among the entire workforces.	1.3 5.2
Gender-neutral language 2024	The SOI uses the guidelines for gender-neutral language in German-language texts published by the federal government.	Minutes of directorate meeting, 22 June 2021
Fringe Benefits 2024	Family and work » Possibility for home office » Annual working period (time off in lieu). » Further training and unpaid leave Insurance benefits and employer contributions » Maternity and paternity benefits: 100 % continued pay (statutory: 80 %).	
Sustainability at the SOI, 2023	Goals of Vision 6: The SOI is an attractive, fair and inclusive employer » 'The SOI pays fair wages and ensures equal pay.' » 'The SOI is a family-friendly employer.' » 'The SOI values good communication and the inclusion of all employees.' » 'The SOI is committed to helping socially disadvantaged groups.'	9.6.1 9.6.2 9.6.3 9.6.6
Mission Statement 2026	We value diversity as a valuable asset and work to overcome our own prejudices.	