

# WSL Gender Action Plan 2022–2024



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### Publication Details

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The WSL Gender Action Plan 2021-2024 is available in German and English. The German version is binding.

Based on the WSL Gender Action Plan 2019/2020 (valid until the entry into force of the Gender Action Plan 2022–2024)

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## Foreword by the Directorate

Further entrenching a culture of equal opportunities for women and men and having gender balance in all positions and at all levels are key concerns for the WSL Directorate.

The measures detailed in this document will serve to achieve this goal. *Gender mainstreaming* forms the cornerstone of our gender strategy. Specifically, this means that we include both women and men in all decisions, projects and plans and take into account the various realities and life plans of people of all genders.<sup>1</sup> To ensure that equal opportunities are firmly embedded at WSL, its Equal Opportunities Office reports directly to the Directorate.

Respectful, appreciative and supportive interaction as well as dialogue skills are key to facilitating successful day-to-day collaboration. Management and staff are responsible for ensuring that the women and men in research, organisational and administrative roles can contribute their expertise and personalities to help shape WSL.

Rather than being a standalone document, this *WSL Gender Action Plan* forms part of the ETH Domain's Gender Strategy 2021-2024. The individual institutions are tasked with implementing this strategy by taking suitable measures tailored to their respective situations. The WSL Directorate warmly welcomes the catalogue of measures presented in this document and is convinced of its importance. It has decided to implement the measures in the current planning period (until the end of 2024).

The WSL Directorate – Beate Jessel, Christoph Hegg, Anna Hersperger, Rolf Holderegger, Birgit Ottmer, Andreas Rigling, Jürg Schweizer

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<sup>1</sup> Gender is a construct encompassing the social and cultural roles, behaviours and interests associated with a certain sex. Mainstreaming means making something a normal, natural action. Gender mainstreaming is a comprehensive strategy for achieving equality between women and men. See FOGE (ed.) (2004). *Gender Mainstreaming in der Bundesverwaltung, Leitfaden für den Einbezug der Gleichstellung von Frau und Mann in die tägliche Arbeit der Bundesangestellten* (Gender mainstreaming in the Federal Administration: Guide to incorporating gender equality into the day-to-day work of federal employees).



## Introduction

As part of the ETH Board's Strategic Plan 2021–2024, the ETH Domain has set itself the goal of improving its gender balance by increasing the share of women in not only teaching and research but also in management positions, and promoting equal opportunities for women and men. To this end, it has developed an overarching strategy setting out general principles and comprising five focus areas, namely: (i) strong anchorage of equal opportunities in the institutions, (ii) awareness of gender stereotypes and biases, respectful conduct and communication, (iii) career development for women at all stages, (iv) conditions for a good life-domain balance, and (v) gender issues in research and teaching.

For the second implementation phase of the Gender Action Plan, the Directorate continues to focus on measures for women in research (scientific and technical staff). This focus results from the fact that the proportion of women in management positions is very low at 24% and in permanent scientific and technical positions at 28%, as shown in Fig. 1:

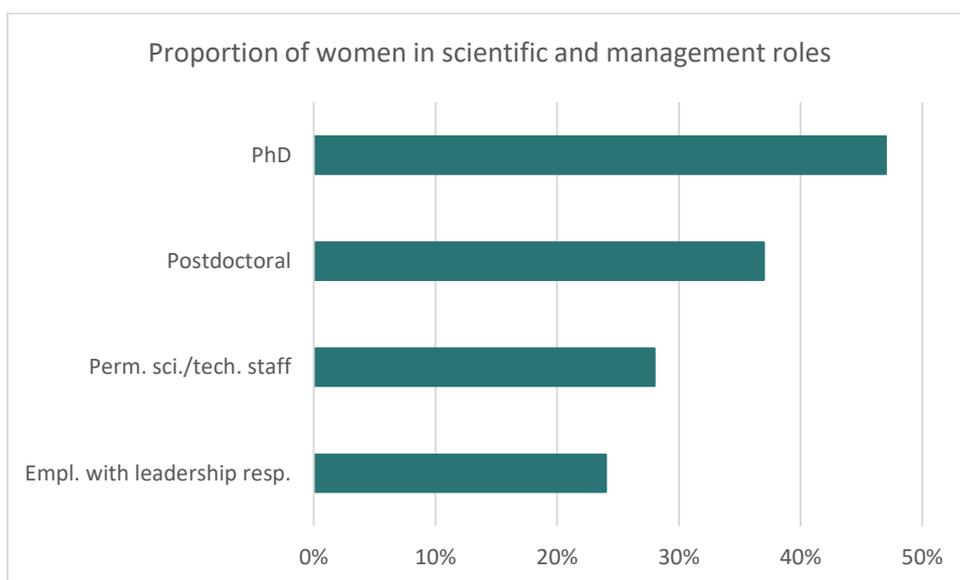


Fig. 1: Proportion of women by staff category as of November 2021

Key: Perm. sci./tech. staff encompasses senior scientists, technical employees and scientific employees.

Management includes directors, deputy directors, research unit managers, support unit managers, and group, programme and centre managers.

The substantive basis for this measure catalogue is provided by the *WSL Gender Action Plan 2019–2020*. The current plan includes all measures set out in the previous version and supplements them where new opportunities have become available (such as the mentoring programme for women aspiring to become managers) or where further needs have arisen over the past two years (such as compatibility coaching or recruitment monitoring). This *Gender Action Plan* is more reader-friendly in its layout and language than the previous version, with an emphasis on maintaining the clarity and binding nature of that text. The four focus areas in the previous version have been retained, as illustrated, with examples, in Fig. 2.

## Ensuring equal opportunities with the WSL Gender Action Plan 2022–2024



Fig. 2: Interacting components of the Gender Action Plan 2022–2024

### 1 Recruitment Process

WSL has announced its intention to increase the proportion of women among its workforce, especially in permanent positions and in management roles. WSL is aiming for a 50-60% share of women in new scientific appointments for the period 2022-2024. Furthermore, women should hold at least 28% (currently 24.4%) of all WSL management roles by 2024, with a target of 30% being pursued.<sup>2</sup> WSL's HR policy lays down the basic conditions and process standards to this end.

#### a. Recruitment with search committees

Search committees are established to fill vacancies at technical and scientific levels and above in research units if the roles in question last longer than one year. These committees comprise at least four people, namely two women and two men. In the case of larger committees, each gender should be represented by at least 40% of committee members. If search committees are set up for other positions in addition to those described here, the above rules must also be applied.

HR staff sit on search committees, as can the Equal Opportunities Officer. However, at least one woman from the specialist area in question (science/technology) should be included.

Special cases and exemptions to this procedure must be justified to the Executive Board.

To ensure a professional recruitment process, even in larger committees, HR provides all those involved with a brochure containing guidelines and advice. Tips on dealing with unconscious bias are available on the intranet.

<sup>2</sup> These values are possible if half of the management positions that are likely to fall vacant by 2024 are filled by women.



b. Searching for and selecting candidates

When selecting candidates, at least one woman and one man must be shortlisted; it is better to have at least two candidates who are suitable based on the recruitment criteria. Suitable persons of both genders must be invited to interviews. Special cases and exemptions to this procedure must be justified to the Executive Board.

In the event of a foreseeable imbalance in applications, other options besides the usual recruitment channels, e.g. social media, current or former networks, associations, former employees and direct approaches, must be used as soon as possible. This applies to managerial vacancies in particular.

c. Jobsharing and consideration of non-linear career paths

As a rule, WSL is open to job sharing. Management roles could be extended to 120% on a case-by-case basis in order to compensate for the increased coordination effort. However, individuals with close personal relationships cannot share a job.

When assessing candidates and their career paths, the search committee takes due account of the impact of part-time employment, maternity leave, parental leave, longer-term absences, etc. on a candidate's career track record.

d. Allocation of 100% positions when filling permanent or tenure track positions

If, when filling a 100% position approved by the Directorate, a new incumbent wishes to temporarily reduce their workload by more than 20% for family-related reasons, the research or support unit may apply for the unused percentage as other support. This temporary additional position must be directly related to the permanent or tenure track position in question. This rule only applies to the time freed up by the reduction in the level of employment of the holders of the permanent or tenure track positions concerned. There will be no entitlement for temporary additional positions to be made permanent. The additional position is limited to ten years and must be re-applied for at least every two years.

e. Gender balance within the Directorate

Should a Directorate member retire, a candidate of the underrepresented gender should be appointed to achieve a gender balance within the Directorate.

f. WSL job advertisements

In 2022, the Diversity & Inclusion Office will team up with HR to review job advertisements for gender-neutral language and appeal to all genders.

## 2 Career Support

This measure catalogue is geared towards the transition between stages of an academic career. We offer mentoring, training and coaching to support female scientific and technical staff in particular, although these measures are open to all WSL employees where appropriate.

a. Career development programme for women in science: Fix the Leaky Pipeline

WSL is encouraging female PhD students and postdoctoral researchers to take part in the ETH Domain's Fix the Leaky Pipeline programme, which offers courses, coaching and one-to-one mentoring as well as the opportunity to form peer mentoring groups. WSL is involved in planning the programme within the relevant ETH Domain committees and informs its employees about what is on offer.

b. CONNECT: Connecting Women's Careers in Academia and Industry

This programme helps to connect women's careers in academia and the public and private sector. WSL is a member of the programme's steering committee, which is an initiative of the ETH Domain and other institutions.

c. Internal support to promotion of women into leadership positions by fostering leadership skills

The number of people leaving WSL due to retirement is set to increase over the coming years. Line managers must focus more on supporting female employees who have management potential to develop their leadership skills so that they have a chance to apply for management positions when they are advertised. Human Resources and the Equal Opportunities Officer can be contacted for advice.

d. Training opportunities for all job levels and age groups

Group leaders ensure that they actively inform both female and male staff members about the many opportunities for further training and development, regardless of their role or age. This encompasses, for example, developing specialised and transferable skills, attending management courses, scheduling (mini) sabbaticals or participating in mentoring programmes, professional networks and networking events.

If desired, individual support can also take into account gender-specific aspects, such as attending management courses for women and participating in women's networks or gender-specific coaching and mentoring opportunities.

e. Mentoring programme for women wanting to take on managerial responsibility

Women who want to take on managerial responsibility can work with a mentor to reflect on their career and life plans, on challenges they face, etc. over the course of a year. The programme is supervised by the Diversity & Inclusion Office and is geared towards women in research or support units. Those within research units can take part in the programme after the postdoc level and in new tenure track positions. The programme will be launched by 2023.

### 3 Life Domain Balance

These measures aim to secure a study-work-life balance for men and women with the aid of basic conditions and funding instruments.

a. Family support for postdoctoral researchers

If postdoctoral researchers wish to take on childcare responsibilities, they can reduce their level of employment to between 60 and 80% for up to one year and apply for an extension of their position to up to 120% (e.g. they can work at 60% for two years rather than 100% for one year).

Alternatively, the reduced work-time percentage may be partially offset for one year, for example with a technician or a student assistant, upon application to the Executive Board. The total work-time percentage of 120% will be achieved by an appropriate combination of individual work-time percentages (e.g. 60% + 60%).

b. Flexible working

Where possible, job advertisements should indicate scope for flexible working, for example by specifying ranges such as 60 to 100% or similar.

c. Social hardship

WSL employees with childcare commitments can apply for assistance from the institute's Social Fund if they are experiencing social hardship. Further information is available from Human Resources.

d. Compatibility coaching

WSL offers employees with current or future caring responsibilities (children and/or dependents) the opportunity to reflect on their professional and private situation in a maximum of two free coaching sessions, if required. This offer is aimed at couples as well as individuals, parents-to-be and those who have been parents for some time. Further information on the [intranet](#).

e. Crèches in Zurich

WSL employees can send their children to crèches run by the kihz Foundation (priority admission). More details can be found on the [ETH website](#).

f. Childcare activities during school holidays

It is often difficult to organise childcare during school holidays. Since 2018, an August [summer camp](#) for children has been held at WSL's Birmensdorf site in partnership with kihz. In addition to this summer camp, WSL employees can take advantage of kihz's [other holiday care options](#). WSL subsidises the summer camp in Birmensdorf for its employees.

g. Parent-child rooms

Both the Birmensdorf and Davos sites have a dedicated parent-child room where employees can nurse and spend time with their children. The rooms are fitted out with beds, chairs, toys and work facilities. More details are available on the [intranet](#).



h. Dual-career couples

Through the ETH Domain, WSL is a member of the International Dual Career Network (IDCN), which offers support in finding and applying for jobs to the partners of WSL employees coming to Switzerland for the first time. More details can be found on the WSL intranet.

#### 4 Other measures

Real equality requires us to change our mindset and bring about a cultural shift. Institutes have a range of accompanying and evaluation measures at their disposal to raise the employees’ awareness of stereotypes and encourage them to watch out for limiting preconceived roles and adopt a respectful attitude. However, everyone needs to make equity a cornerstone of their daily lives for this to be a success.

| MEASURE  | EXPLANATION  | PERIOD   |
|--|--|--|
| <i>Contact point for sexual harassment and discrimination</i>                                    | WSL has had a confidential contact point for sexual harassment and discrimination since 2011. More details can be found on the intranet under <u>Respect Code of Conduct</u> .   | Ongoing  |
| <i>Creation of a Diversity Board</i>   | In the second half of 2022, a WSL Diversity Board will be established to represent the different groups within WSL. The existing Diversity Board, an ad-hoc group established in 2020, will be dissolved.  | Second half of 2022  |
| <i>Diversity consultation and annual meeting</i>   | From 2022 onwards, the Diversity Officer will meet with all heads of research units and service and support units to reflect on the challenges or sources of friction in the respective units, the best practices that are already being implemented and where there is a need for pre-emptive action.<br><br>The Diversity & Inclusion Office can of course also be contacted all year round by those with questions and suggestions or for conflict mediation. | First half of 2022   |
| <i>Management training</i>   | From December 2021 onwards, management training will be held for all group leaders, with inclusion, encompassing issues such as gender diversity, forming an integral part of all modules.   | Dec. 2021 to Dec. 2022, and thereafter rolling modules as required |
| <i>Gender monitoring and provision of information on gender equality and equal opportunities</i> | HR and the Equal Opportunities Officer carry out annual reporting on gender issues as part of the annual report or on behalf of the ETH Board and the Advisory Board. Since 2020, the proportion of women in employment has also been surveyed annually. Every four years, comprehensive monitoring and reporting on the situation of women at WSL (like the Women's Strike Day in 2019) is carried out and the findings published.                              | Annual<br><br>Every four years                                     |
| <i>Annual in-house diversity report</i>  | A report on the activities of the Diversity & Inclusion Office is published annually on the intranet.  | By the end of March of the following year                          |
| <i>Guide to gender-neutral language</i>  | Written as well as spoken language is the core form of communication. Gender-aware language ensures visibility, encompasses everyone and helps avoid stereotyping and discrimination. The <u>WSL Guide</u> is available on the intranet (in German only).  | Ongoing  |

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|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Equal pay analysis</i>                | WSL has signed the Charter for equal pay in the public sector and has equal pay between men and women reviewed every five years.   | Every five years                      |
| <i>Employee survey</i>                   | A staff satisfaction survey was conducted at WSL in spring 2022. One section covered various aspects of diversity, in particular the inclusion of women at WSL. The results will be incorporated into the work of the Diversity & Inclusion Office.  | Spring 2022                           |
| <i>Respect campaigns</i>                 | Advocating for respectful interaction is an ongoing theme at WSL. Another Respect campaign was rolled out in autumn 2021. The <a href="#">Respect Code of Conduct</a> is available on the intranet.<br><br>In 2023, WSL will take part in the activities on 23 March marking the national Day against Sexual Harassment at Swiss Universities. | Ongoing<br>Autumn 2021<br>March 2023  |
| <i>Stereotypes and bias training</i>     | Over the next few years, various workshops and other activities will build on the courses on unconscious bias held in 2020.  | Ongoing                               |
| <i>Paternity leave</i>                   | The ETH Domain offers 20 days' paid paternity leave to fathers upon the birth of their child.<br><br>If both partners are ETH Domain staff, the four-month maternity leave can be divided between the parents, with the father being allowed to take a maximum of two months.  | Ongoing                               |
| <i>Scientific conferences and events</i> | At WSL scientific conferences and events, care must be taken to ensure that women make up at least 30% of invited experts, with gender balance being sought if possible.   | Ongoing                               |
| <i>Workshops and training</i>            | For topics not covered by Fix the Leaky Pipeline, <sup>3</sup> WSL can offer workshops and training covering gender equality and the promotion of diversity.   |                                       |
| <i>WSL committees</i>                    | WSL aims for gender balance when making new appointments to replace retired committee members.   | When appointing new committee members |

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<sup>3</sup> Joint funding programme for female scientists within the ETH Domain.