

VICESSE Research GmbH – Gender Equality Plan

Preface

VICESSE Research GmbH, the Vienna Centre for Societal Security (VICESSE thereafter) is a non-profit, small research organisation. Its research focus is societal security.

VICESSE currently has 14 employees and three associated researchers.

VICESSE strives to be an inclusive workplace. It is committed to an active equal opportunities and anti-discrimination policy to ensure equal opportunities and fair treatment for all employees. We are convinced that appreciative and respectful relations are the foundation for a positive working environment and crucial to the quality of the outcome of our research. We as VICESSE have a legal as well as a moral obligation to create an appreciative, tolerant, and non-discriminatory atmosphere for all employees. Our Gender Equality Officer gives advice and counselling and supports employees in issues of equal treatment, equal opportunities, gender equality and anti-discrimination. Their duties also include monitoring compliance with gender equality regulations.

Our statement

VICESSE is committed to the advancement of women and to actively support equality between women and men, equality for people with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses, and the respectful treatment of transgender, intersex, and non-binary people. It rejects all discrimination and disadvantages in connection with caring responsibilities.

Discrimination refers to the objectively unjustified disadvantage, unequal treatment or degradation of individuals or groups of persons on the basis of certain characteristics. At VICESSE we are committed to preventing discrimination on the grounds specified by law: Gender, Ethnicity, Religion, Belief, Age or Sexual Orientation.

Direct discrimination takes place when persons are treated unequally based on these grounds in comparable situations. Indirect discrimination takes place when seemingly neutral regulations or rules have a disadvantageous effect on persons on the basis of these grounds.

Discrimination and harassment on the basis of a disability are prohibited by the disabled persons employment act. The Austrian federal equal opportunities act (Bundes-Gleichbehandlungsgesetz, B-GIBG) also prohibits discrimination in the form of sexual harassment and harassment.

The Austrian federal equal opportunities act defines sexual harassment as conduct that is destroying or intended to destroy a persons' dignity and that is unwanted, inappropriate, degrading, insulting, or offensive (see section 8a, para. 16 of the B-GIBG). At the workplace and at the place of study, such a behaviour creates an intimidating, hostile, or humiliating work environment for the person affected (see *ibid.*).

It is our mission at VICESSE to safeguard and maintain approximate gender-parity in the makeup of our staff across different levels of seniority and function. The gender equality data survey and general obstacle survey serve as a basis for our action plan as well as our recommendations formulated within the gender equality plan. Particular emphasis is placed on issues of seniority (work experience) and formal qualifications (highest degree) with regards to distribution of tasks and responsibilities. This is demonstrated by the fact that we place strong emphasis on an egalitarian and equally allotted distribution of tasks in the areas of project acquisition, (academic) publications, media relations, and representation. At the same time, VICESSE is aware of differing, gendered societal pressures and demands regarding care work, which are taken into account and assessed on a case-by-case basis. This leads to an equal distribution of project responsibilities/institutional responsibilities and supporting work, as well as an open and care-work friendly work environment. VICESSE also support employees in making use of remote-working to better facilitate and encourage care-work friendly work environment, as well as a healthy work-life balance.

Gender Sensitive Research

VICESSE recognises the importance of gender sensitivity in our research. This includes but is not limited to gender mainstreaming in every endeavour, striving for multi-perspective and inclusive research. VICESSE further recognises a gender sensitive approach as a strength of our organisation.

This is especially relevant on topics with a gender relevant focus. VICESSE currently undertakes research projects dealing with domestic violence (IMPROVE, VIPROM), fatherhood (NESTOR), human trafficking (A4), public security (GATHERINGS) and radicalisation (INDEED). For 2024 proposals on gender and radicalisation are prepared.

Gender sensitive topics necessitate gender sensitive methodologies. VICESSE provides trauma sensitive interviewing workshops for personnel conducting such interviews. We respect the need of victims during interviews. E.g.: Gender of interviewer, presence of a trusted person, place or time of interview. This is always communicated to interviewees well in advance, so they have time to make a thought-out decision on their preferences.

Beyond interviews, we take responsibility for including gender aspects when monitoring tools and technological innovations (RIFIDAS, IMPROVE). VICESSE has proven internal capacities to discuss and determine gendered approaches to our research.

Gender-inclusive use of language

Language not only reflects social conditions, but also shapes our perception. Through the conscious use of our language, we actively contribute to the equality of all genders and to an appreciative gender and to address everyone in an appreciative way. Gender-inclusive language recognises that there are more than two genders, and that gender identities, gender expressions and bodies are diverse. It helps to avoid misunderstandings and discrimination.

The following recommendations offer guidance for any new or unfamiliar forms of language use. unfamiliar forms of language use. A conscious use of language also means that we question and change language again and again.

Below you will find various suggestions for gender-inclusive language in written and oral communication; these are based on the [standards of the University of Vienna](#).

- > Recommendation 1: References to gender should be avoided as long as they are not necessary.
- > Recommendation 2: If all genders are not explicitly mentioned, gender-neutral (non-binary) formulations can be used.
- > Recommendation 3: No binary formulations should be used in a gendered address.
- > Recommendation 4: A person's gender should not be inferred from their appearance or name.

Gender Equality Overview

Relevant baseline data and targets

Organisation	NB	Female	Male
Employees		5	9
Associated Researchers		1	2
Promotions		2	1
New Hires		1	1

Salary Class	Positions	Criteria	NB/Diverse/prefer not to say	Female	Male
0	Director	Management and oversight of organisational, financial, and academic aspects of the institute. Must hold a proven track record as a post-doc researcher.			2
1	Senior Researcher	One of the following two criteria must be fulfilled: 1. The Researcher must hold a habilitation, an associated/junior professorship position or higher. 2. The Researcher holds responsibilities at VICESSE that go beyond the responsibilities of Post-Doc research staff. These must entail responsibilities covering extensive managerial tasks.			2(1*)
2	Post-Doc Researcher, Financial Officer/Project Manager	One of the following two criteria must be fulfilled: 1. The Researcher has been awarded the academic title of PhD or an equivalent. 2. The Researcher holds responsibilities at VICESSE that go beyond the responsibilities of research staff. These must entail responsibilities covering extensive managerial tasks.		2 (2*)	3 (2*)
3	Researcher, Financial Officer/Project Manager	One of the following two criteria must be fulfilled: 1. The Researcher must hold at least a master's degree or equivalent. 2. The Researcher holds responsibilities at VICESSE that go		3	2

		beyond the responsibilities of an intern. These must entail responsibilities including organisational development, proposal writing, work package and/or task leads.			
4	Research Assistant	Must be enrolled in a relevant bachelor's level degree. They must be able to work unsupervised on a given research task.			
5	Intern	There are no specific criteria for Interns.			
*With managerial function					

Overall VICESSE employs 35% female and 65% male persons, with no intersex or non-binary persons on staff. VICESSE recognizes the short coming of having an all-male managing directorate. To counterbalance and increase equality in the team VICESSE has successfully increased the number of female senior employees with managerial functions. Managerial functions in this context constitutes responsibility for internal project management on projects with contributions from more than one of VICESSE's researchers, as well as supervising interns or other personnel.

VICESSE encourage for every staff member to avail themselves of the paternal and educational leave provisions offered by the Austrian government. In 2023, two female members of our team embarked on leave of absences to pursue doctoral studies. Additionally, one of our managing directors took six months of paternal leave. Beyond these formal leaves, our flexible work-time model empowers employees to effectively manage their caregiving responsibilities, and we actively encourage them to do so.

VICESSE recognizes that work-life balance is an essential component of employee well-being. Our commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment extends to ensuring that our staff can prioritize their personal and family commitments without compromising their professional growth.

The Austrian government's paternal and educational leave provisions serve as valuable tools for achieving this balance. By enabling our team members to take time away from their roles to focus on personal pursuits, we invest in their long-term professional success and personal fulfilment.

Beyond these statutory entitlements, VICESSE's flexible work-time model provides employees with the autonomy to structure their workdays in a manner that aligns with their individual needs and preferences. This flexibility empowers our team members to manage their caregiving responsibilities effectively while maintaining their productivity and engagement.

VICESSE is committed to creating a workplace that fosters a harmonious coexistence between professional and personal life. We believe that by supporting our staff in achieving a fulfilling work-life balance, we can unlock their full potential and contribute to a thriving and productive organization.

Over the coming year, VICESSE will strive to better its inclusion and promotion of women and non-binary personnel. Our Gender Equality Officer will be present during job interviews. Regular meetings have been installed to inform employees of the details of the gender equality plan, as well as discuss any relevant updates and/or debate issues around these topics.

Gender-based incident

VICESSE is committed to proactively preventing any gender-based incidents from occurring, acknowledging that such incidents may still arise. We define an incident as any situation in which a member of our staff encounters a gender-based barrier or obstacle in their work. VICESSE aims to address incidents that arise both within our team and with external parties.

VICESSE recognizes and upholds the victim's right to control their situation. Any action taken in response to any incident will be at their discretion and will never be initiated without their explicit consent. If they choose to pursue action, we have a clear process in place they can follow. We respect their right to pursue a different course of action if they so choose.

This process is as follows:

1. Contact the designated Gender Equality Officer (GEO) you feel most comfortable with. Hannah Reiter (she/her) and Matthäus Vobruba (he/him) are the current GEOs at VICESSE.
2. The GEO will engage in a confidential and supportive discussion with you to explore various options for addressing the situation. These options may include:
 - Deliberating on the incident to gain a deeper understanding of the circumstances and perspectives involved.
 - Initiating a dialogue with the third party involved, either directly or with the GEO's assistance.
 - Seeking solutions with management to rectify the situation or prevent future occurrences.
 - Providing guidance and support in contacting relevant authorities if necessary.
3. For cases that require immediate action, do not hesitate to dial 133, the emergency number in Austria.
4. If an employee does not feel comfortable discussing an incident with either the GEO, management, or a colleague, they are encouraged to contact Act4Respect at +436706007080 or via the website <https://sprungbrett.or.at>.

VICESSE prioritizes the well-being of its employees and is committed to creating a workplace where everyone feels safe, respected, and empowered to pursue their career goals without fear of gender-based discrimination or harassment. We believe that by fostering a culture of open communication and support, we can effectively address any incidents that arise and ensure a more equitable and inclusive work environment for all.

The GEO will also monitor and address incidents if they feel a line was crossed. Any such address will be private and follow the same procedure as if the GEO had been contacted.

Gender Equality Audit

Overall there is awareness of role gender can play in our work. Our employees feel management is addressing gender issues adequately. The main challenges come from working on funding based projects, not from gender based obstacles. However, there is also a general understanding that there is always room for improvement, but no concrete action items were specified.

The Gender Equality Audit was answered by 10 employees (=71%). Following are the statistical answers given about their employment. The qualitative answers are considered confidential and will not be published in this Plan.

Gender Equality Audit Statistics	NB	Female	Male
Answered Survey		4	6
Publications		3	8
Projects Led		3	12
Project Deliverables		7	12
Media appearances		7	7
Academic qualifications		2	1
Bachelor's degree			1
Master's degree		2	1
Doctoral degree		2	4
Fixed Term (first contract)		1	2
Permanent Contract (first contract)		3	4
Fixed Term (now)			
Permanent Contract (now)		4	6
Work-hours per Week			
20h			1
30h		4	4
40h			1

Gender Equality Objectives 2024

VICESSE is committed to enhancing its workforce by recruiting more women and non-binary individuals in 2024. We also aspire to elevate more women and non-binary colleagues to managerial positions in the forthcoming year.

A female intern is slated to commence her employment in February. Moreover, the return of two female researchers from their academic leave of absence will bolster the diversity of viewpoints at VICESSE. Two colleagues, one female and one male, are anticipated to finalize their doctoral studies in 2024. As of December 2023, no requests for parental leaves of absence have been received for 2024.

While not achievable in 2024, a long-term objective is to establish an advisory board for gender equality, which will operate independently of VICESSE's structure. Preliminary planning for such a board will be undertaken in 2024.

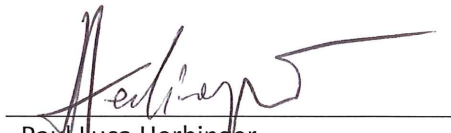
The overall objective of this plan, namely to amplify diversity within our workforce, our research topics, and our methodology, while also creating a secure work environment for every employee regardless of gender, sex, age, sexual orientation, or any other personal characteristic, will be pursued in 2024 and beyond.



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