

# Equality Plan 2022-2025

## Foreword

With the implementation of the new Strategy 2025, EFI has greatly changed over the last 5 years. A new office in Bonn, Germany was established, and the negotiations around the establishment of a new office in Rome, Italy are being concluded. New programmes have been developed in the thematic areas of Bioeconomy, Resilience and Governance and new facilities have been launched, such as International Partnerships, Genetic Resources and Bioregions.

This successful institutional evolution has only been possible with the full support of highly committed staff. Thus, it is of utmost importance that EFI offers its staff a positive and inspiring environment, where they have the opportunity to excel, develop their skills, fulfil their ambitions and openly contribute towards institutional developments.

Equal treatment and opportunities are a prerequisite for the creation of a positive institutional atmosphere and creative spirit. This Equality Plan provides a review of EFI's staff diversity development in recent years, provides an analysis of staff perceptions in relation to equality, and provides a set of priority actions to be taken in the coming years. The Equality Plan was developed by the Equality working group, which was made up of 6 staff members, including two Directors that assumed the role of senior leads.

Joensuu, June 2022

Dr. Marc Palahí  
EFI Director

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## 1 Background

European Forest Institute (EFI) is an intergovernmental organisation established by a treaty between European states, controlled by these Member states and governed solely by its constituent documents under public international law.

The constituent documents of EFI consist *inter alia* of the Convention on the European Forest Institute and several agreements between host governments and the Institute.

The Convention on European Forest Institute is currently ratified by EFI's 30 member states and incorporated as part of each member state's national legislation. All Host Country Agreements have also been incorporated as part of national legislation.

The host country agreements confirm the status of the Institute as an international organisation, and provide for certain privileges and immunities in this respect.

As EFI is an intergovernmental organisation, national and supranational legislation is not applicable other than as agreed, for example in host country agreements.

EFI has its own governing and supervisory bodies established under the Convention on European Forest Institute, and is governed by rules approved by these bodies.

This is intended to safeguard the unimpeded and independent functioning of EFI.

The Institute consists of four organs: the Council, the Conference, the Board and the Secretariat.

The Council consists of representatives of the Members and meet in ordinary sessions every three years. It sets the strategic direction of the Institute through a policy framework, and provides for oversight of the functioning of the Institute and its organs.

The Conference consists of representatives of the Associate Members and meets once a year in plenary session, where also the Affiliate Members may participate. The Conference mainly engages in respect of the work plan of the Secretariat.

The Board is composed of eight persons, four appointed by the Council and four by the Conference. The Board meets regularly and oversees the work of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat is headed by the Director and comprises the personnel of the Institute.

## 2 EFI's rules and regulations on equality and equal opportunities

EFI promotes and safeguards equality through its system of rules and regulations, and engages in this respect with the Staff Committee.

Fair and equal treatment of staff is a guiding principle for work at the Institute, as stated in the equality and fairness statement in the preamble of EFI Staff regulations. Equality is furthermore enhanced through provisions in the Staff regulations on leaves (such as maternity, paternity and parental leave), flexible working hours, and the possibility to work from locations outside of the office.

Compliance is addressed in the Staff code of conduct, and in the general terms and conditions for the office of the Director.

On a general level, neutral terms such as 'employee', 'staff member', 'chairperson', and 'chair' are used in the Institute's rules, regulations and policies. If more appropriate, use of 'he/she' may be used.

Equality is more specifically addressed in the following EFI regulations:

- *Code of conduct*<sup>1</sup>

All staff members shall, according to the Staff code of conduct, deal with each other, and with representatives and delegations of the organs of the Institute, in a fair and equal manner.

Also, the Director is under an obligation to treat staff members and members of the Institute's other organs with dignity and respect<sup>2</sup>.

The Board code of conduct<sup>3</sup> states that Board members shall treat EFI staff members, the Director, members of other organs, and other Board members with dignity and respect.

- *Equal opportunities and respect at work*<sup>4</sup>

The Equal opportunities and respect at work policy is the core document in establishing the Institute as an equal opportunity organisation, committed to promoting equality, diversity and providing an inclusive working environment free from discrimination, harassment and bullying.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/whistleblowing/Staff\\_code\\_of\\_conduct.pdf](https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/whistleblowing/Staff_code_of_conduct.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/whistleblowing/Director\\_code\\_of\\_conduct.pdf](https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/whistleblowing/Director_code_of_conduct.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/whistleblowing/Board\\_Code\\_of\\_Conduct.pdf](https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/whistleblowing/Board_Code_of_Conduct.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/equality/Equal\\_opportunities\\_and\\_respect\\_at\\_work\\_policy.pdf](https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/equality/Equal_opportunities_and_respect_at_work_policy.pdf)

More specifically, the policy provides for explicit prohibition regarding direct and indirect discrimination:

- Direct discrimination means treating someone less favourably than another person was treated, is treated or would be treated, in a comparable situation, because of a certain personal characteristic (actual, perceived or through association). Different treatment does not constitute discrimination if the treatment is based on applicable regulations and it otherwise has an acceptable objective and the measures to attain the objective are proportionate.
- Indirect discrimination, on the other hand, means a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects only a person with a particular characteristic, and which cannot be justified as legitimate and proportionate.

Bullying constitutes unacceptable behaviour at the Institute. It is manifested as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority, but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation. Examples of bullying are physical or psychological threats, overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision, and inappropriate derogatory remarks about someone's performance.

In addition to bullying, harassment is explicitly addressed in the Equal opportunities and respect at work policy as unacceptable. Harassment is unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Examples of harassment are unwanted physical contact, derogatory or degrading remarks or insults, or spreading rumours or gossip.

The document also establishes a mechanism for review of actions and misconduct, which is of pivotal importance in creating and safeguarding a work environment based on equal treatment.

○ *Recruitment instructions*<sup>5</sup>

It is stated in the general principles section of the Recruitment instructions that recruitment shall be based on a fair and unbiased selection process.

EFI is committed to ensuring that no consideration will be given to nationality, race, gender, age, political persuasion, marital status or sexual orientation when carrying out a recruitment process.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/equality/Recruitment instructions.pdf](https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/equality/Recruitment%20instructions.pdf)

Statistics on gender is recorded in an applicants log, which allows for follow up of equality aspects.

○ *Whistleblowing policy*<sup>6</sup>

As part of the efforts to ensure compliance, EFI is from 1 January 2022 enacting a whistleblowing mechanism to provide possibilities to report on *Misconduct*: non-compliance with EFI's rules and regulations, as well as corrupt and fraudulent practices by contractors, grantees, in-house consultants or special advisers.

A designated external hotline for anonymous reporting has been set up.

It is prohibited to take action, recommend action, or threaten with action, to punish a Whistleblower (the person reporting) for reporting or cooperating in good faith in relation to suspected or determined/established *Misconduct*. This applies even if the reported matter turns out to be unfounded.

A Whistleblower who considers him/herself having been retaliated against must immediately report this to the Director (or to the Board if it concerns retaliation by the Director), through the Legal Counsel. Such a claim must be substantiated with information and/or documentation.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/whistleblowing/Whistleblowing\\_policy.pdf](https://efi.int/sites/default/files/files/whistleblowing/Whistleblowing_policy.pdf)

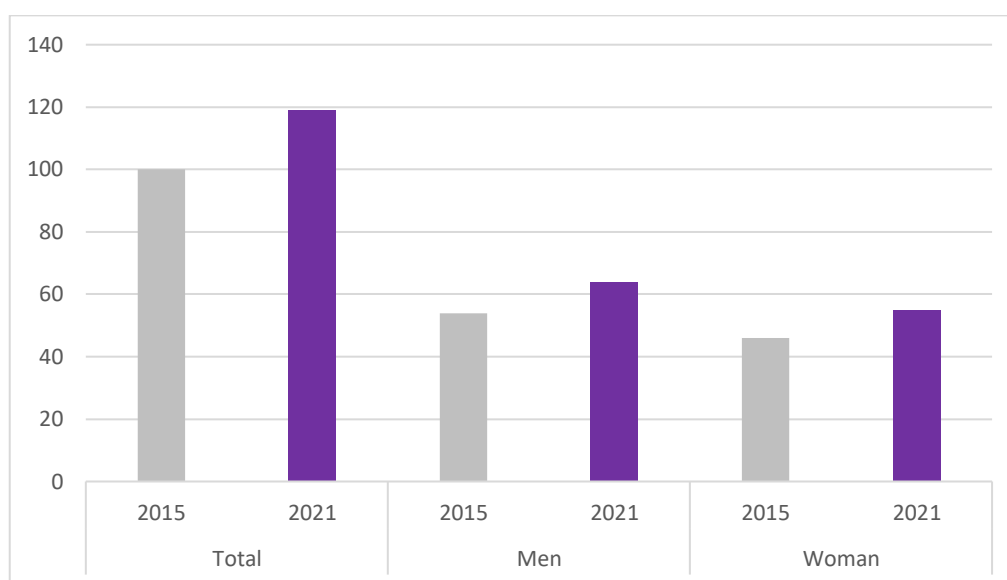
### 3 Staff diversity at EFI

In this chapter we present the state of employee diversity at EFI at the time of the development of this document (31 October 2021) and the development since 2015. The comparison to 2015 was made, as the EFI Strategy 2025 started to be implemented in 2016, which brought a number of institutional changes and impacted EFI's structures and staff.

#### 3.1 Staff analysis

In October 2021 there were 119 employees at EFI, which is 20% (+19) more than in December 2015 (Figure 1). The gender ratio (women/men) in 2021 remained at the same level as in 2015.

Figure 1: EFI staff in 2015 and 2021



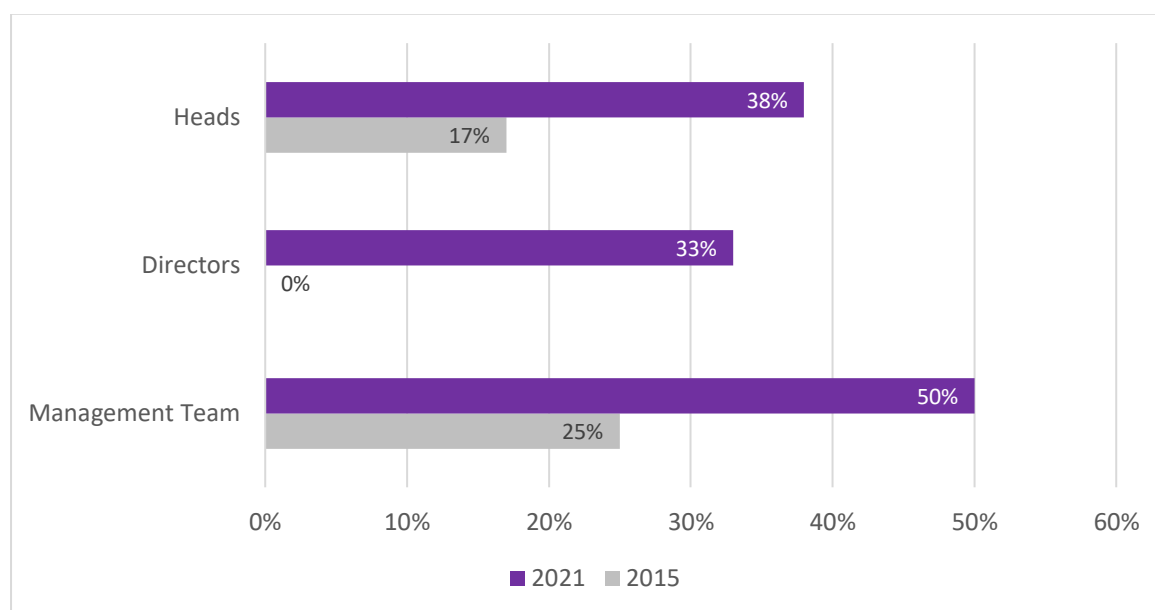
##### 3.1.1 Management positions

As of October 2021, there were 3 persons in Director level positions and 8 persons as Head of Units. For both, the share of women has increased in the past 5 years considerably (see Figure 2). Compared to 2015, in the year 2021 nearly half of all head of Units positions and one director level position are filled with females.

Furthermore, in accordance with EFI's operational framework, a Management Team (MGT) is established to advise the Director on matters that concern the management of the Institute. In 2021, the MGT had 8 members including 4 women. In 2015 the Team had 5 members including 1 woman.



Figure 2: Share of women in EFI's management in 2015 and 2021

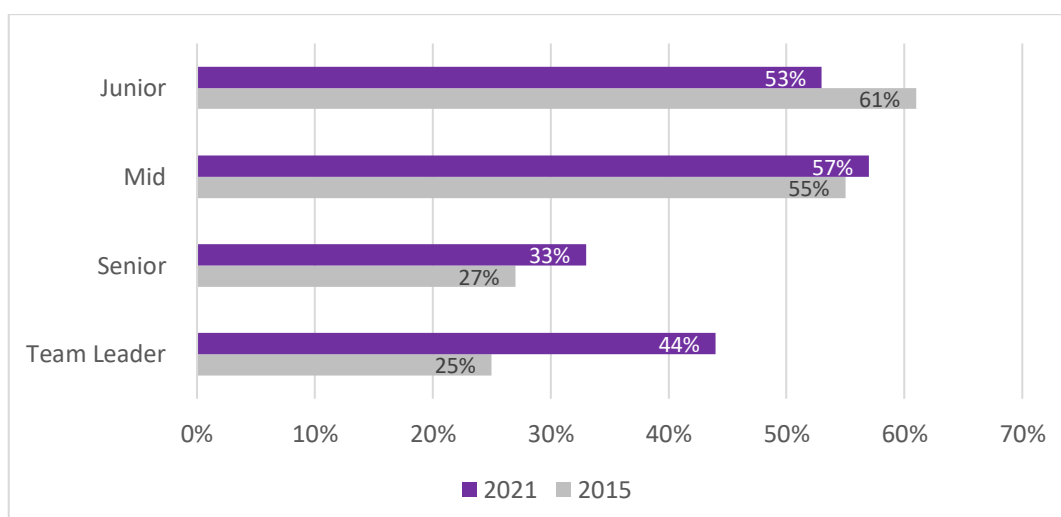


### 3.1.2 Personnel

The Institute has a four-stage career model. Juniors are supporting the implementation of processes (i.e., research, policy support, administrative) or are implementing sub-processes. Mid-level employees are independently implementing processes. Seniors are responsible or coordinate activities at office or institutional level. Team leaders are responsible or coordinate activities at office or institutional level and manage a team of at least 3 staff members.

More women than men work on the junior- and mid-level job levels (share >50%), while the share of men is higher in senior and team leader positions. However, in the past 5 years there has been a trend towards increasing the share of women in the higher-level positions, while it decreased in the junior positions (see Figure 3).

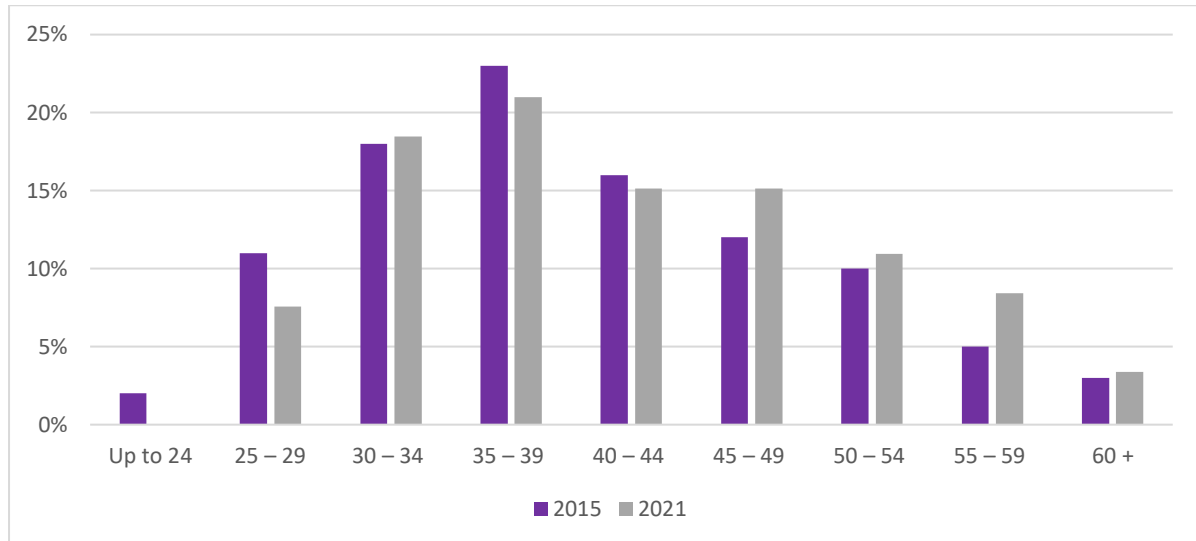
Figure 3: Share of women in different job levels in 2015 and 2021



### 3.1.3 Age distribution

The average age of EFI employees in 2021 was 42 years, while in 2015 the average age was 40 years. In both years (2015 and 2021), the largest age group was 35-39 years. The age distribution did not significantly change in the last five years (see Figure 4).

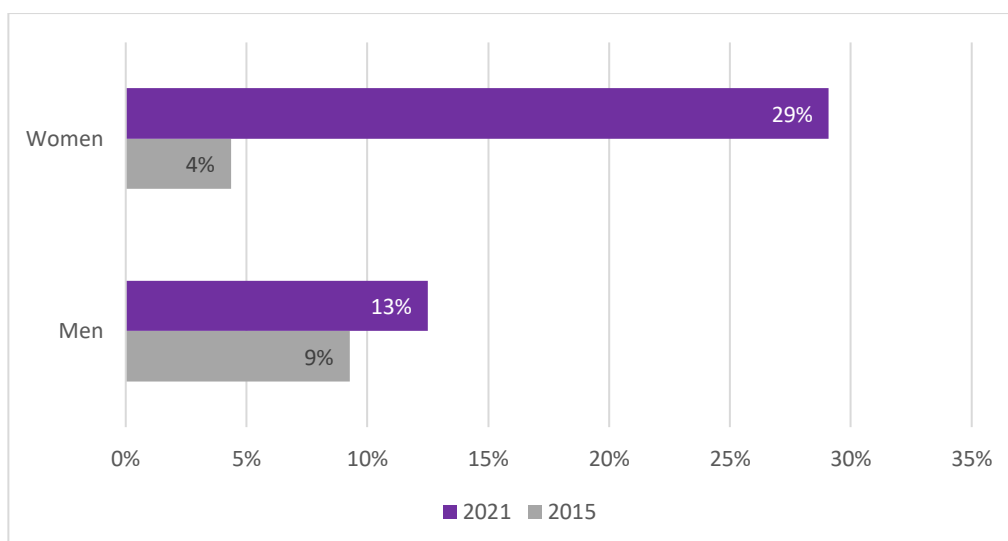
Figure 4: Distribution of employees by age groups



### 3.1.4 Contractual relationship

To accommodate specific needs of employees, EFI offers flexible employment conditions like the possibility for part-time employment. In the period 2015-2021, the share of part-time employees increased from 7% to 20%. Overall, the part-time employment is more frequently chosen by women (see Figure 5).

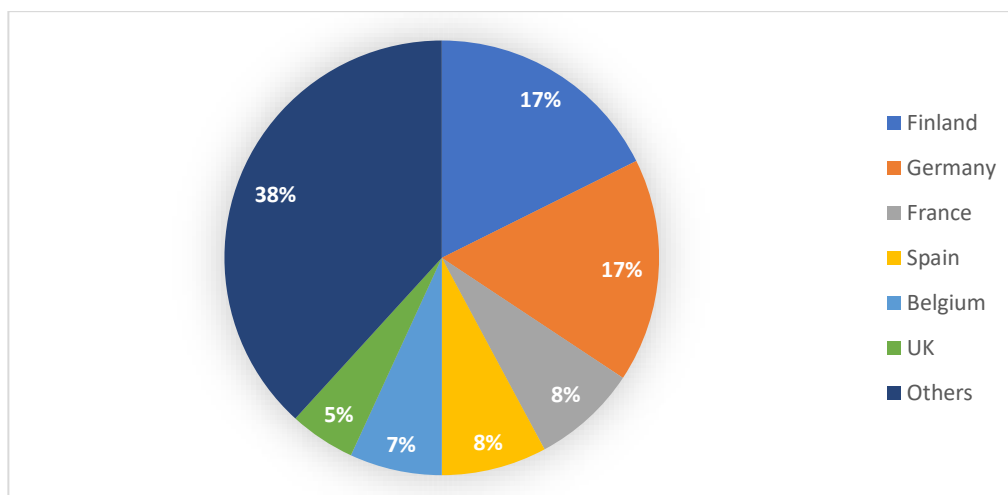
Figure 5: Share of part-time employees by gender and year



### 3.1.5 Internationality

In 2021 there were staff members from 31 different nationalities at EFI (see Figure 6). This is five more nationalities than in 2015.

Figure 6: Country of origin of employees in 2021



### 3.1.6 Salaries

EFI's salaries are defined in accordance with EFI's salary scheme. The salary is defined based on the job level, responsibilities in terms of activities, budget management, funding expectations and team supervision.

Table 1: Average gross salaries for different job levels and gender in 2015 and 2021

Job level	Average gross salary in 2021 (2015)		Ratio <sup>7</sup> (W/M) 2021 (2015)
	Men (EUR)	Woman (EUR)	
Junior	3291 (1998)	3249 (2449)	0.99 (1.23)
Mid	5340 (4572)	4138 (3485)	0.77 (0.76)
Senior	5863 (5579)	6504 (4344)	1.11 (0.78)
Team leader	7631 (6020)	6000 (8563)	0.79 (1.42)
Head	7950 (6926)	8750 (5204)	1.10 (0.75)

Table 1 shows that on average (in 2021), women had higher salaries than men in senior (+11%) and head positions (+10%), while they had on average lower salaries at mid (-23%) and team leader (-21%) levels.

<sup>7</sup> The Ratio (F/M) represents the quantitative relation between average salaries between women and male employees. A ratio of 1 means women's salary on average equals men's salary. If the ration is lower than 1, means that women's salary is on average lower than men's. If the ration is higher than 1 it indicates that women's salary is on average higher than men's.

These differences are not systematic but reflect different responsibilities. This is also confirmed by the changes since 2015, which broadly coincide with the overall staff career development (e.g., increased share of women in heads and senior positions). Nevertheless, it will be important to closely monitor future developments.

### 3.2 Staff survey on perceptions of gender equality at EFI

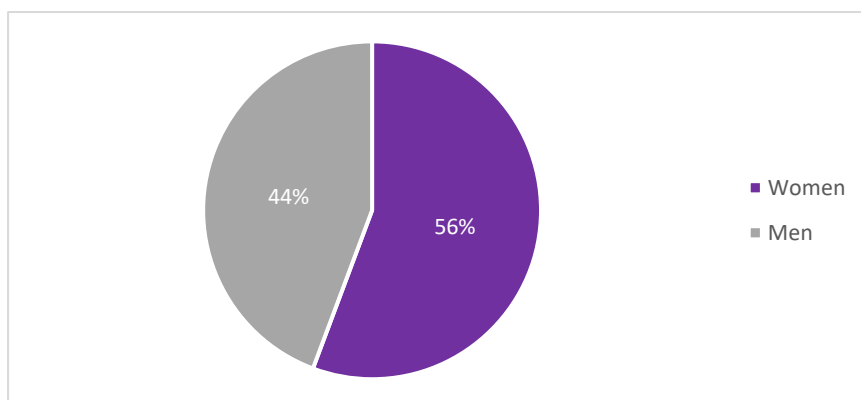
A staff survey on the perceptions of gender equality within EFI was implemented in late autumn 2021. The questionnaire addressed three main questions:

1. Do you perceive that there is gender equality at EFI?
2. Have you ever experienced gender inequality at EFI? If yes, what concerns did you face due to your gender at EFI?
3. What in your opinion could be done to further enhance gender equality in EFI?

#### 3.2.1 Respondents

The questionnaire was distributed to all EFI employees (119) through emails. In total 78 responses were received, which represents a 66% response rate.

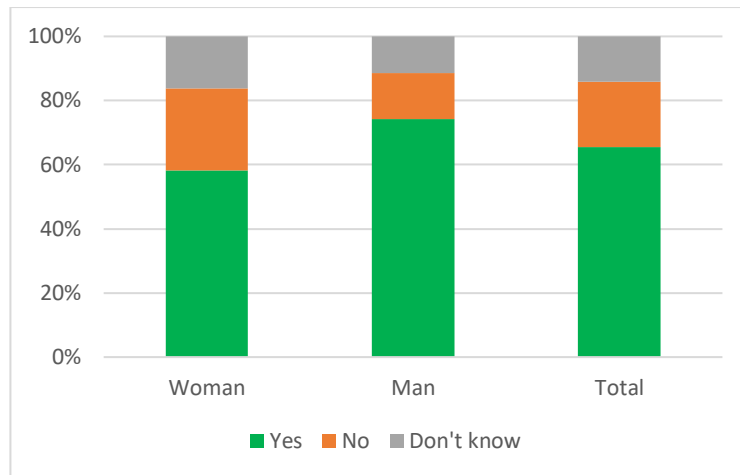
Figure 7: Gender structure of survey respondents



#### 3.2.2 Responses

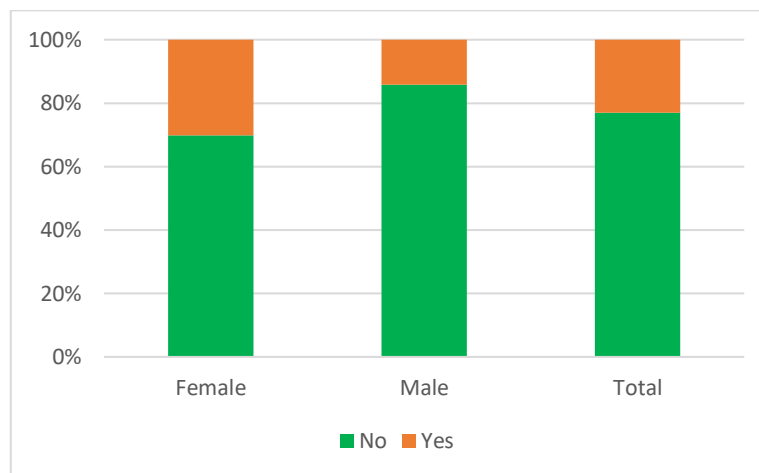
With regards to the *first question* (*Do you perceive that there is gender equality at EFI?*) on the perception of gender equality at EFI, 65% of the respondents perceive that EFI as a gender equal organisation, while 20% do not (see Figure 8). The percentage of those who do not think that EFI is a gender equal organisation, is higher with women (25%).

Figure 8: Distribution of responses to the question "Do you perceive that there is gender equality at EFI?" (N=78)



With regards to the *second question* (Have you ever experienced gender inequality at EFI? If yes, what concerns did you face due to your gender at EFI?), 77% said that they have not experienced gender inequality at EFI. This percentage responding, they had experienced gender inequality at EFI was higher with women, where 30% experienced unequal treatment, while only 14% man responded that they have been treated unequally. When asked what this related to, it was mostly related to poorer treatment including contract conditions and a lower chance for promotion, but also general gender discrimination issues.

Figure 9: Distribution of responses to the question "Have you ever experienced gender inequality at EFI? " (N=78)



With regards to the *third question* on how to enhance gender equality at EFI, 53 answers were received. In the analysis the answers were separated for those that did not see any gender inequality at EFI from those that identified gender inequality issues.

The qualitative analysis identified for the non-discrimination group respondents (40 respondents) four areas of potential improvements: *family friendliness, recruitment, payment, training*.

1. With regards to *family friendliness*, it was suggested to support employees with families more, irrespective of gender and to promote wo/men with children as well as develop an equal parental leave policy.

2. With regards to *recruitment*, it was suggested to give equal opportunities to women including the use of recruitment procedures without names and gender as well as basing promotions on qualifications only and not on gender equality.
3. With regards to *payment*, it was suggested to promote equal payment regardless of gender and increase transparency.
4. With regards to *training*, it was suggested to promote gender values across the organisation in training and to not separate wo/men into different groups.

Finally, it was suggested to provide special opportunities with regards to diversity and inclusivity, including gender-diverse people and gender equality aspects in decision-making, and to use gender-balanced project teams including for events as well as publications.

For those respondents that had said that they had experienced gender inequality, three areas of potential improvements were identified: *staff treatment, recruitment, and payment*.

1. In relation to *staff treatment*, it was suggested that staff should be treated equally based on merits and skills.
2. *Recruitment* was suggested to not only respect gender equality aspects, but also to be sensitive to other aspects (e.g., ethnicity).
3. With regards to *payment*, it was suggested to promote salary transparency, offer equal payment for same positions. Finally, it was suggested to develop a universal set of rules for promotion.

In conclusion, it can be said that the survey found a high level of satisfaction with gender equality issues, but in terms of staff treatment, recruitment and transparency issues, areas for potential improvements were identified in the staff survey.

## 4 Equality priority areas and actions

Based on the collected information and the suggestions provided by employees, we identified the following priority areas for development:

- Recruitment
- Work and career advancement
- Management and supervision

### 4.1 Recruitment

Within EFI, recruitment is based on a fair and unbiased selection process, with applicants' suitability determined by qualifications and experience requirements for the position as decided by the recruitment selection committee. The criteria used must be transparent. EFI's recruitment instructions outline the steps to be followed by the recruiting supervisor.

Equality within recruitment is promoted by using competitive recruitment processes which are advertised internationally and within EFI. The recruitment selection committee usually consists of at least three persons, who evaluate the applicant's suitability for a position from different perspectives.

In addition to the competitive recruitment process, direct appointment can be used subject to authorisation by the EFI Director. This is used primarily for positions that are part-time or for short-term contracts, when there is no known internal capacity.

Since 2020, EFI maintains a log of all applicants received, which records statistics related to gender, age and nationality. This is used to identify trends and areas of under representation of applicants.

#### Actions:

1. *Consideration to be given to utilising so-called blind selection of candidates in the initial stages of the recruitment process.*
2. *When carrying out a competitive recruitment process, diversity must be considered when selecting members of the selection committee.*

### 4.2 Work and career advancement

#### Terms of employment and career development

These aspects must be based on a set criterion as defined by EFI and made available to all employees. Decisions and treatment of staff must not be based on age, gender, ethnicity or any other grounds that would be viewed as discriminatory.

It is important to consider that as EFI funding is predominately related to short-term projects (up to 4 years), this results in most employees working under fixed-term contract

arrangements. However, employee benefits are available to all employees regardless of their contractual status within EFI subject to the fulfilment of certain criteria i.e., length of service, minimum duration of employment contract.

EFI has developed a salary scheme which encompasses all positions within EFI. It identifies the qualifications and role expectations at the different grades within EFI. Employee salary reviews are generally carried out through individual negotiation. Internal equity at the location of employment must always be considered when deciding on an employee's salary.

The main tool used within EFI to assess performance and support career development of employees is a Performance and Development Discussion (PDD). PDDs are carried out annually and give supervisors the opportunity to review employee performance and to gain a deeper understanding of their employees: i) how they work ii) their achievements iii) their potential and iv) development needs. The PDD process is not directly linked to salary reviews within EFI.

It should be noted that EFI is a small organisation with only a limited number of positions and career paths. Thus, it is not always possible to provide career development opportunities in the form of promotion. However, other actions are taken such as enhancement of position through increased responsibility or tasks.

#### Actions:

1. Implement a researcher and expert career stages process to support career development, by detailing expected role competences and role requirements at each grade level to ensure equal treatment.
2. Add section to PDDs to enable employees to give feedback on the supervisor's leadership and the opportunity to report any potential discrimination or unequal treatment in the workplace.
3. Principles, criteria and attitudes affecting task division and career development will be openly discussed with employees.

#### Wellbeing and flexible working

EFI supports employee wellbeing and aims to constantly develop the working environment to the benefit of all employees in all its EFI locations.

EFI actively encourages employees to maintain a work-life balance and gives opportunities for employees to decide on their start and finish time each day, to work from home office, reduce working hours and undertake career breaks. These opportunities are available to all employees. EFI has developed policies to support wellbeing and home office working.



Actions:

1. Ensure all employees are aware of the different policies related to employee wellbeing and that supervisors implement them equally for all employees.
2. Carry out an employee wellbeing survey annually to identify potential trends within the different employee groups within EFI and take action as required.

#### 4.3 Management and supervision

The role of EFI management and supervisors plays a vital part in the realisation of equality within EFI. They must be aware of the objectives of equality and non-discrimination regarding all employees. The need for training in equality and non-discrimination issues is considered as part of EFI's overall development plan.

Actions:

1. Management and supervisors are required to participate in regular management development training with emphasis on equal and fair treatment.
2. All employees must undergo equality and non-discrimination training (every two years) to ensure all are aware their individual obligations.

The actions identified are to be implemented by 31.12.24, in readiness for the next review of the equality plan in 2025.

## **5 Preparation, validity and monitoring of the equality plan**

This Equality Plan is in force until 31 December 2025 or until a revised Equality Plan is approved.

The Plan was drafted by the equality working group composed of the following members:

- Andrew Male, Head of HR & Administration
- Jerker Brolén, Legal Counsel
- Dr. Helga Pülzl, Assistant Director (senior co-lead)
- Laura Lappalainen, HR Officer
- Dr. Robert Mavsar, Deputy Director (senior co-lead)
- Ulla Väänttinen, Executive Assistant

The equality working group will monitor the implementation of the plan and annually report about the progress to the management team.