

Gender Equality Plan

Armenian Bioinformatics Institute (ABI)

Adopted: April 2026

Review cycle: Annual (next review: April 2027)

Approved by: Dr Lilit Nersisyan, Director, Armenian Bioinformatics Institute

1. Institutional commitment

The Armenian Bioinformatics Institute (ABI) is committed to fostering a research environment in which all staff, trainees, and collaborators are treated equitably regardless of gender. This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) establishes binding institutional measures, monitoring obligations, and accountability mechanisms to advance gender equality across ABI's research, training, and operational activities.

This plan is endorsed and signed by the Director as the responsible officer and is publicly accessible as part of ABI's institutional documentation. It applies to all ABI personnel — researchers, technical staff, administrative staff, and trainees — as well as to externally funded project activities coordinated by ABI.

2. Dedicated resources

ABI allocates the following resources to implement and sustain this plan:

- **Gender equality responsible person.** The Director serves as the institutional gender equality responsible person, with operational support from the project management function. This role includes overseeing the implementation of GEP measures, reviewing annual monitoring data, and reporting to institutional leadership.
- **Staff time.** Implementation of GEP measures — including data collection, reporting, training coordination, and policy review — is integrated into the responsibilities of ABI's administrative and project management staff. A minimum of 0.05 FTE equivalent is allocated annually to GEP-related activities.
- **External expertise.** Where internal expertise is insufficient — particularly for unconscious bias training and gender-in-research workshops — ABI will engage external trainers or draw on resources available through its international collaborations and professional networks.
- **Budget.** GEP implementation costs (training materials, external facilitation, data collection tools) are covered within ABI's annual institutional operating budget. For externally funded projects, gender monitoring activities are integrated into project work plans and budgets where applicable.

3. Data collection and monitoring

ABI collects and reports sex/gender-disaggregated data to track progress and identify areas requiring corrective action.

Data collected annually:

Indicator	Disaggregation	Source
Staff composition by role category (senior researcher, junior researcher, technical, administrative)	Sex (F/M/other or prefer not to say)	HR records
New hires and departures by role category	Sex	HR records
Applicants and shortlisted candidates for open positions	Sex	Recruitment records
Trainees and summer school participants (OMICSS and other ABI-organised programmes)	Sex	Registration data
Participants in mobility actions and international exchanges	Sex	Project records
Leadership and decision-making positions (Director, project PIs, steering committee members)	Sex	Institutional records
Authorship on ABI-affiliated publications (first author, corresponding author, senior author)	Sex	Publication records
Participation in grant proposal preparation (PI, co-PI, task lead)	Sex	Grant records

Reporting:

- An annual gender monitoring summary is prepared by the gender equality responsible person and reviewed by ABI's Director.
- For externally funded projects, gender statistics are included in project deliverables and periodic reports as required by the funding programme.
- Monitoring data informs corrective measures under Sections 4–7 below.

Baseline (April 2026):

- ABI's senior research staff has a female majority.
- The Director and most senior leadership position is held by a woman.
- Gender-disaggregated data collection begins systematically with this plan's adoption; the first full annual report will be produced by April 2027.

4. Training and awareness

ABI implements awareness-raising and training activities to address unconscious gender biases and promote an inclusive institutional culture.

Measures:

Measure	Frequency	Target audience	Responsibility
Unconscious bias awareness session	Annual (beginning 2026)	All staff and decision-makers	Director, with external facilitation as needed
Gender dimension in research: integrating sex and gender variables into study design and analysis	At least once per two-year cycle	Researchers and trainees	Director, drawing on external expertise as needed
Induction briefing for new staff including GEP overview and institutional expectations	At each new hire	New staff members	Administrative staff
Gender-aware mentoring guidance for supervisors of trainees and junior researchers	Annual refresher or at onboarding	PIs and senior researchers	Director

Targets:

- All staff participate in at least one gender awareness activity per two-year cycle.
- Training participation is tracked by sex and role category in the annual monitoring summary.

5. Work-life balance and organisational culture

ABI fosters a working environment that supports work-life balance and an inclusive organisational culture for all staff.

Measures:

- **Flexible working arrangements.** ABI supports flexible working hours and remote work where compatible with research and operational requirements. Requests are assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Director, with a presumption of approval unless operational constraints prevent it.
- **Leave and care responsibilities.** ABI complies with Armenian labour legislation on parental leave, sick leave, and care responsibilities. Staff returning from extended leave

receive a structured reintegration plan, including updated access to institutional systems, project briefings, and where applicable, adjusted workload during the first month.

- **Inclusive meeting and event scheduling.** Institutional meetings, training sessions, and project events are scheduled during standard working hours where feasible, avoiding systematic scheduling that disproportionately excludes staff with care responsibilities.
- **Respectful workplace.** ABI maintains a zero-tolerance policy for harassment, discrimination, and bullying. Any staff member may raise a concern with the Director or, where the concern involves the Director, with the ABI Board. Complaints are handled confidentially and promptly.
- **Inclusive language and communication.** ABI's institutional communications, job postings, and public-facing materials use gender-inclusive language.

Targets:

- All job postings include a statement on ABI's commitment to gender equality and flexible working.
- Zero unresolved harassment or discrimination complaints at each annual review.

6. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

ABI promotes gender-balanced representation in leadership roles, decision-making bodies, and externally visible positions.

Measures:

- **Institutional leadership.** Gender balance in ABI's Director and senior researcher roles is monitored annually. Where imbalances are identified, targeted recruitment and career development measures are applied (see Section 7).
- **Project governance.** For externally funded projects coordinated by ABI, gender balance among project PIs, WP leaders, steering committee members, and task leads is actively considered during team formation. Where gender imbalance exists in a project's leadership structure, ABI documents the reasons and identifies compensating measures (e.g., gender-balanced advisory input, mentoring opportunities for underrepresented gender in leadership pipeline).
- **External representation.** ABI aims for gender-balanced representation at conferences, workshops, summer schools, and policy meetings. Speaker and presenter selection for ABI-organised events (including OMICSS) explicitly considers gender balance.
- **Selection panels.** Recruitment and evaluation panels include members of more than one gender wherever possible given the size of the institution.

Targets:

- Gender composition of project leadership teams and selection panels is reported in the annual monitoring summary.

- At least 40% representation of each gender among ABI-nominated speakers and presenters at institutional events over each two-year reporting cycle, subject to the available pool of qualified candidates.

7. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

ABI applies gender-aware practices in recruitment, hiring, and career development to ensure equal opportunity.

Measures:

- **Job advertisements.** All positions are advertised using gender-neutral language, with an explicit statement of ABI's commitment to gender equality. Qualifications and requirements are stated in terms of competences rather than proxies that may introduce gender bias.
- **Selection criteria.** Evaluation criteria for recruitment and promotion are defined in advance, documented, and applied consistently. Career breaks (e.g., parental leave, care responsibilities) are not counted negatively in career progression assessments.
- **Shortlisting.** Where an applicant pool is significantly gender-imbalanced, ABI reviews whether the advertisement, channel, or requirements may have unintentionally discouraged applicants of a particular gender, and adjusts future postings accordingly.
- **Career development.** ABI supports the career progression of all staff through access to training, mentoring, international mobility, and participation in externally funded projects. The Director ensures that opportunities for career-advancing activities (conference attendance, publication authorship, grant preparation, mobility actions) are distributed equitably.
- **Mentoring and networking.** ABI facilitates access to external mentoring and networking programmes that support career development for underrepresented genders in bioinformatics and computational biology, including relevant European professional networks and gender-in-science initiatives.

Targets:

- Gender distribution of applicants, shortlisted candidates, and hires is tracked annually.
- All staff have access to at least one career development or mentoring opportunity per year.

8. Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

ABI integrates sex and gender considerations into its research design, analysis, and training activities where scientifically relevant.

Measures:

- **Research design.** Where ABI's research involves human-derived data or clinical material, study design considers sex as a biological variable. This includes sex-balanced recruitment where feasible, sex-stratified analysis where sample size permits, and reporting of sex-disaggregated results in publications.
- **Training content.** ABI's training programmes — including the OMICSS summer school and project-specific training under externally funded activities — incorporate modules or content on the relevance of sex and gender variables in bioinformatics and genomics research. This includes awareness of how sex differences in biology affect genomic analyses (e.g., cancer genomics, pharmacogenomics) and how gender biases can affect data collection and interpretation.
- **Publication practice.** ABI encourages authors of ABI-affiliated publications to follow the SAGER (Sex and Gender Equity in Research) guidelines for reporting sex and gender information in study design, data analysis, and results interpretation.
- **Grant proposals.** ABI's grant preparation process includes a checkpoint for assessing whether the gender dimension is relevant to the proposed research content, in line with international funder requirements.

Targets:

- All ABI-coordinated grant proposals include a documented assessment of the gender dimension in research content.
- OMICSS summer school includes at least one session or module addressing sex/gender considerations in genomics per edition.

9. Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

ABI is committed to providing a safe working and learning environment free from gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and any form of intimidation or coercion.

Definitions:

- **Gender-based violence** includes any act of physical, psychological, or economic violence directed against a person on the basis of their gender, as well as threats of such acts and coercion.
- **Sexual harassment** includes any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature — whether verbal, non-verbal, or physical — that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment.

Measures:

- **Zero-tolerance policy.** ABI maintains a zero-tolerance policy for gender-based violence and sexual harassment. This policy applies to all staff, trainees, visiting researchers, and

collaborators in all ABI-controlled spaces and ABI-organised activities, including off-site events, mobility actions, summer schools, and conferences.

- **Reporting channels.** Any person who experiences or witnesses gender-based violence or sexual harassment may report it to the Director or, where the concern involves the Director, to the ABI Board. Reports may be made in writing or verbally. Anonymous reporting is accepted and will be investigated to the extent possible.
- **Confidentiality and non-retaliation.** All reports are treated confidentially. ABI prohibits retaliation against anyone who reports a concern or participates in an investigation in good faith. Any act of retaliation is itself a disciplinary matter.
- **Investigation and response.** Reports are assessed promptly by the Director (or Board delegate). Where a report is substantiated, ABI applies proportionate corrective measures, which may include formal warning, reassignment of duties, termination of contract, or exclusion from ABI-organised activities. In cases involving potential criminal conduct, ABI cooperates with relevant Armenian authorities.
- **Support.** Affected individuals are offered appropriate support, which may include adjusted working arrangements, referral to external counselling or legal services, and protection from further contact with the person concerned during the investigation.
- **Training integration.** The annual unconscious bias and gender awareness session (Section 4) includes a module on recognising and preventing gender-based violence and sexual harassment in academic and research settings.
- **Third-party and event safety.** For ABI-organised events with external participants (including OMISS summer schools and project workshops), ABI communicates expected standards of conduct and provides a designated contact person for reporting concerns during the event.

Targets:

- All staff are informed of the zero-tolerance policy, reporting channels, and their rights at induction and through the annual awareness session.
- All ABI-organised events with external participants include a code-of-conduct statement and a designated contact person.
- Zero unresolved complaints at each annual review; any complaints received and their resolution are documented (in anonymised form) in the annual monitoring summary.

10. Implementation timeline

Period	Actions
April 2026	GEP adopted and made publicly accessible; baseline data collection initiated; gender equality responsible person designated; zero-tolerance policy and reporting channels communicated to all staff
July–August 2026	First unconscious bias and anti-harassment awareness session for all staff; gender dimension module included in OMICSS 2026; code-of-conduct statement adopted for ABI-organised events
April 2027	First annual monitoring report; GEP review and update based on monitoring findings
April 2028	Second annual monitoring report; external review of GEP measures if resources allow

11. Review and accountability

This plan is reviewed annually by the Director. The annual review assesses progress against targets, identifies areas requiring corrective action, and updates measures as needed. The review findings are documented in the annual monitoring summary and are available to staff upon request.

For externally funded projects, GEP compliance is reported through the applicable project reporting mechanisms. Where project-specific gender monitoring requirements exceed this plan's baseline, ABI applies the more demanding standard.

This Gender Equality Plan is a living document. ABI welcomes feedback from staff, trainees, and collaborators on its content and implementation.

Signed:



Dr Lilit Nersisyan
Director, Armenian Bioinformatics Institute
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