

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

The European Commission (EC) is committed to promoting gender equality in research and innovation. As a participating research organisation, Louis Bolk Institute (LBI) supports this through our own commitment towards gender and social equality in our own organisation, and our applied research community. To this end, this Gender Equality Plan summarises the measures, activities and policies that LBI has implemented or plans to implement in the coming year.

Gender equality in numbers

LBI strives to be a gender balanced institution, where employees have equal access and balanced participation in leadership and decision making roles. To this end we have already several measures in place which are starting to have an impact in the decision making roles and the composition of the executive board.

In Q1/Q2 of 2022 we collected data on the current gender distribution throughout the institution. In 2021 we have hired 6 women and 3 men.

- Overall (M/F): 49/51
- Managing Board: 50/50
- Program Coördinator: 80/20
- Senior researcher: 70/30
- Medior researcher: 33/67
- Junior researcher: 50/50
- Lab-workers 67/33
- Staff: 22/78

However, as the current gender distribution (Q1/Q2 2022) demonstrates, whereas new recruits demonstrate our intention, gender balance in the senior and decision making roles could be better. Career development, however, takes time, hence the higher number of female medior researchers which is expected to translate in a more equal division in senior researchers and Program Coordinator roles within 3 to 5 years. This is taken into account in our internal personal development paths and the allocation of promotion opportunities.

Our ambition to achieve a more equal access to senior and decision making positions by women and men will also require investments to keep staff committed to the institute instead of leaving after competencies development was facilitated and acquired.

These data are monitored yearly and considered in recruitment process. Progress is reported on in our annual report (jaarverslag).

Resource dedication

The following resources and measures are in place to ensure gender equality in recruitment and career progression:

- Gender equality and sensitivity is explicitly taken into account when applicants are interviewed for all the positions, including in the executive board, as well as in the consideration of employees for internal promotion opportunities.
- Sensitivity to gender when identifying training, mentoring and coaching needs of employees.
- Proactive facilitation of visibility of female researchers and project leaders in communication
- Creation of rolemodels in decision making positions

To detect any kind of barrier or inconvenience that might exist in the organisation in a timely manner, the following measures are in place:

- An internal and an external confidant councillor are at disposal of each employee so that gender inequality related discomfort and incidents can be safely reported.
- All employees meet the internal confidant councillor at the start of their employment and are reminded of this measure on an ad hoc basis.
- Internal mentoring and internal and external coaching are offered to employees to overcome specific barriers in confidence, leadership qualities and related competences.
- Employees are asked on an ad-hoc basis whether they have experienced gender related barriers and whether any additional support is required. (This has so far not been the case.)
- The internal confidant councillor reports yearly on an anonymous basis to the Board on the themes brought to his attention by employees.

Organisational culture and structure

LBI is aware that the organisational culture plays a key role in establishing a healthy working environment in which both men and women can thrive and have equal opportunities to build a fulfilling career and simultaneously have a fulfilling work-life balance. By focussing on the work-life balance LBI facilitates a potential equal division of career possibilities and domestic chores if people choose so. Currently (Q1/Q2 2022) 81.5% of the employees is working part-time and 70% of employees have arrangements to work at least one day a week from home. By making this flexibility the norm for all employees, it is engrained in the general culture instead of being perceived as exceptions. In addition, we have included gender sensitivity in company outfits, which previously were only available in men's sizes.

Work-life balance

- Flexibility in working hours, option for reduced workweeks and working partly remotely.
- Explicitly promote and discuss healthy work-life balance in yearly personal evaluation process and institute wide workshops on tools to achieve this ("intervisie", coaching, Theory U, ...).
- Strengthening the bond between colleagues in informal social events, a social platform to exchange news and regular formal events to meet. A strong personal bond facilitates employees to express needing support and to find solutions by relying on colleagues .

Parental leave provisions

The Netherlands has a rather good legal right for parental leave for both the pregnant employee and the partner. The right to maternity leave applies both prior to and after childbirth. A pregnant employee is in any case entitled to 16 weeks of leave. Within certain limits, a pregnant employee may herself determine how many weeks of leave she will take before and after childbirth. Birth leave is also made available to partners. Birth leave is sometimes also referred to as paternity leave or partner leave. Following the birth of a child, the partner is entitled to paid birth leave equal to the number of hours worked in one week, starting from the first day after the birth of the child.

In the Netherlands childcare can be difficult to find and the LBI offers flexibility to new parents if they temporarily need to work less while waiting for the childcare of choice to become available.

Communication and unconscious gender biases

Currently, there is an anonymous survey every four/five years to evaluate working conditions in which barriers in general are evaluated. The fact that inequality has never been brought up, does not mean it does not exist at the LBI, but it does mean that explicit training on sensitivity has not been a priority.

In the next evaluation we plan to pose this question explicitly to ensure we can identify potential issues. Another option that we are considering is to bring in an external party to analyse the extent to which this is an issue at the LBI and to be able to decide what kind of intervention would be the most effective.

Safety: Gender-based violence including sexual harassment

LBI is a small institute that fundamentally operates on grounds of mutual respect between its employees. Consequently, gender-based violence is not tolerated within our institution and this is explicitly included in our work code ("arbeidshandleiding"). The internal confidentiality councillor provides a yearly thematic summary of points brought forward and there are regular exchanges with the Director to identify potential need for action. Incidence of gender-based violence has not been yet reported to the confidentiality councillor. In the few incidences where (non gender related) communication was considered problematic, this was directly addressed by the employee concerned and by the Director.

Genderdiversity in our research

LBI conducts research to provide knowledge to further improve sustainable agriculture, food and health. It generally applies an integrative systems approach in its research projects. In this approach social inequality is sometimes already included in our research projects. Working in agriculture or in food and healthcare are contexts which are unbalanced in term of gender equality. From an employee perspective, her/his/their gender can influence how she/he/they are perceived in participatory research projects and can in that sense affect the results. We take this into account, but it does not have an influence on the choice of which employee will do the research.