

ACTRIS ERIC Gender Equality Plan

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1 Introduction and Scope

The European Commission defines the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) as a collection of commitments and actions that strive to promote gender equality in an organisation through a process of structural change (European Commission 2021a). Gender equality, as well as diversity and inclusion, are important concepts in the workplace as they open the organisation to a wider pool of talented workforce, different perspectives, enhanced collaboration, improved well-being and reputation, and, as a result, the organisation's better overall performance. ACTRIS recognises the need for and importance of promoting gender balance and equality throughout the research infrastructure (RI) planning and implementation to stand out as an excellent example of a well-balanced working community.

This document presents gender equality commitments and actions for ACTRIS ERIC, a European research infrastructure and the central hub of the Aerosol, Clouds and Trace Gases Research Infrastructure (ACTRIS). This GEP is developed to support the operations of ACTRIS ERIC, and it follows recommendations set by the European Commission in the "Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans" in 2021. It is important to note that while ACTRIS is a multi-national, distributed research infrastructure involving hundreds of scientific, technical and managerial staff, this GEP concerns only ACTRIS ERIC.

ACTRIS ERIC was established in April 2023, and the staff started employment at the Head Office gradually during 2023-2024. ACTRIS ERIC is a small but diverse organisation, with currently fewer than a dozen employees, with its Head Office in Finland, and one unit located in Italy. The Head Office Unit in Italy has the GEP under its host institution. ACTRIS ERIC recognises that while this GEP concerns only employees of ACTRIS ERIC, all partnering and cooperating institutions and private companies have their own GEPs in place. ACTRIS ERIC also recognises that persons involved within ACTRIS come from various cultural and organisational backgrounds and is aware of the gender-related structures across the wider RI.

It is important to note that while the main purpose of this document is to outline the gender equality aspects of ACTRIS ERIC, this GEP is inherently tied to the overall concepts of equality, diversity, and well-being at work. ACTRIS ERIC has prepared and implemented necessary processes, and this document will be updated annually to reflect the current situation.

2 Mandatory GEP Requirements

2.1 Publication and accessibility

ACTRIS ERIC GEP, presented herein, is openly available on the ACTRIS website.

2.2 Dedicated resources

As an employer, ACTRIS ERIC dedicates the necessary resources for implementing and monitoring the GEP in cooperation with the occupational health services provider of ACTRIS ERIC. The main formal processes are regular staff development discussions and annual wellbeing surveys.

2.3 Data Collection and monitoring

ACTRIS ERIC arranges regular staff development discussions where feedback on GEP-related topics as well as other topics related to staff well-being are reviewed and documented. In addition to the formal regular discussions, ACTRIS ERIC underlines that employees can bring any concerns to the supervisor at any time with the assurance that the matter will be kept confidential.

ACTRIS ERIC organises annual surveys together with the occupational health services provider on staff well-being at work, which includes the GEP aspects. As ACTRIS ERIC is a small organization, special attention is paid to ensuring that the information collected does not breach the employees' privacy. GE-related indicators are monitored and reported regularly to the ACTRIS ERIC General Assembly and summarised in future editions of this GEP. The gender equality aspects are also followed in the projects that ACTRIS ERIC is coordinating and participating in, to ensure equal opportunities for different genders to get involved in the projects.

ACTRIS ERIC also has an Ethical Advisory Board which gives feedback and makes recommendations to maintain and develop the ethical aspects of ACTRIS ERIC and ACTRIS as a distributed research infrastructure; and supports ACTRIS in the development and implementation of ACTRIS ethics policy. ACTRIS Ethics Policy was approved by the ACTRIS General Assembly in June 2025.

2.4 Training

ACTRIS ERIC provides training for the staff on gender equality and equity topics. Dedicated training can be organised also if any issues arise concerning well-being at work or equality at the workplace, or if the staff proposes any timely topic.

3 Recommended GEP Requirements

3.1 Work-life balance and organisational culture

ACTRIS ERIC maintains processes to support its personnel in various life situations to ensure well-being at and outside of work and a healthy work-life balance. This includes, for example, an “early intervention model” executed together with the occupational health services provider to help employees in challenging life situations. The daily working hours will be followed, and action will be taken if any problems occur. Furthermore, staff development discussions are used for regular discussions on the work-life balance. Since the staff of ACTRIS ERIC comes from various backgrounds, special attempts are made to address everyone’s individual needs for a healthy work-life balance. While some of the measures directed towards ensuring work-life balance are described in the ACTRIS Staff rules, Finnish legislation related to this topic also applies.

3.2 Creating equal working spaces

The working culture has shifted to a hybrid model, which means that remote work and working from the office can be combined flexibly. ACTRIS ERIC Head Office guidelines recommend that at least 40% of the monthly working time should be on-site to promote face-to-face interaction and to ensure that personnel have access to proper tools and ergonomic working conditions. However, ACTRIS ERIC is flexible towards hybrid work, where the situation and needs of each staff member are individually discussed and analysed.

ACTRIS ERIC follows the impacts of hybrid work, identifies the competence needs required by new working methods, and implements related development measures as necessary. The possibility of hybrid work facilitates combining work and life outside of work, increasing the well-being of staff in many cases.

3.3 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

ACTRIS has a long-standing tradition of women playing an important role in the leadership and decision-making aspects of the RI. During the two European Commission funded projects ACTRIS Preparatory Phase Project (ACTRIS PPP) and ACTRIS Infrastructure Implementation Project (ACTRIS IMP), there was a healthy balance of men and women involved in all areas of the project operations. ACTRIS IMP D11.7 also reports that the gender balance of the project consortium compares very well with that of the ACTRIS-adjacent projects.

The similar tradition of women paying a critical role has continued in ACTRIS ERIC and ACTRIS RI. Thus, for ACTRIS ERIC, a small organisation with fewer than a dozen employees, this means that despite the existing healthy gender balance, large differences in indicators presented as percentages are possible.

3.4 Gender equality in recruitment and career development

ACTRIS ERIC is an equal opportunity employer. ACTRIS ERIC does not tolerate any discrimination against individuals based on their biological sex, identified gender, ethnicity, cultural background, religion, age, etc. This is applied to both current employees and during the recruitment process. ACTRIS employment policy and ACTRIS Staff rules describe these principles in more detail.

Uniform and defined recruitment practices clarify the recruitment rules and support equal and fair recruitment. When hiring new employees, attention is paid to ensure that recruitment practices, qualification requirements and selection criteria are set so that they are effectively equal to everyone. Regardless of personal characteristics, the most qualified applicant is always selected taking equality and non-discrimination into account.

All employees can advance in their careers. Everyone is guaranteed equal opportunities to develop themselves regardless of their personal characteristics and tasks. For example, regular staff development discussions, personal development plans, training, job rotation and substitutes are utilised in career planning. The personnel are encouraged to seek more demanding work and new tasks according to their interests.

3.5 Promoting equal pay

Equal pay means that the same task-specific pay is paid for work of equal value, regardless of the employee's personal characteristics. The equality of a position means that the key difficulties, competence, responsibility, workload, and working conditions of the work content are of equal value. Personal performance is taken into account in the personal pay component.

Supervisors receive information on the salary system, and financial constraints, and the matter is also discussed with them in connection with the staff development discussions. The basics of the salary system are also discussed with newly hired personnel. When staff know and understand the principles of the salary system, the remuneration criteria remain transparent.

3.6 Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

ACTRIS ERIC has zero tolerance for any form of harassment and gender-based violence. The Code of Conduct, which is under development, will give clear advice on preventing such behaviour and a model to be utilised if any issues are detected. An intervention and reporting model will include concrete steps to handle any issues. Training to deal with harassment at work and unconscious bias to assist staff to identify key triggers and behaviours is organised. ACTRIS ERIC staff are encouraged to contact their supervisor with any such concerns.

4 Previous development

In all, ACTRIS has been successful in ensuring that both men and women are given equal opportunities for involvement in various aspects and tasks of the developing RI.

In 2024, ACTRIS ERIC had in place the ACTRIS employment policy, ACTRIS staff rules and occupational health procedures with the occupational health action plan. Gender equality was considered in staff recruitment. ACTRIS ERIC conducted the first employee wellness survey for the staff working in the Head Office Finland, and one aspect of the survey was gender equality. The results of the survey showed that half of the personnel considered gender equality was reached. Some stayed neutral, and a small fraction thought that the gender balance was not reached. In the written answers, however, no concerns or related issues were brought up. In future surveys the meaning of the terminology will be made clearer to guarantee that the personnel will understand the questions in the same way.

5 Current state of affairs

In 2025 the ACTRIS Head Office Finland and Italy staff participated in two webinars organised by the ERIC Forum. The first webinar trained the staff on the fundamentals of gender equality and the impact of unconscious biases. The staff gained essential knowledge and practical tools to foster an inclusive and equitable workplace and academic environment. The second seminar focused on addressing workplace issues and trained staff on – sexual harassment, undesirable behaviour, gender-based violence and microaggressions. It covered the role of external ombudspeople, showcased good practice examples, and provided essential knowledge on these topics.

The ACTRIS Head Office Finland conducted an ACTRIS ERIC employee wellness survey that was launched at the end of 2025. This year, ACTRIS ERIC employee wellness survey also included the Italian part of the Head Office. The results will be examined at the beginning of 2026.

6 Future development

ACTRIS ERIC will continue the development and monitoring of the processes and procedures for fostering, implementing, and monitoring gender equality and equity. In cooperation with the occupational health service provider, staff wellness surveys will be organised. The results will be discussed with the staff and any needed measures taken and training arranged. In 2026, ACTRIS ERIC will develop the Code of Conduct including measures about harassment and bullying at workplace or at any ACTRIS related event. In addition, the procedure of staff development discussions will be finalised and institutionalised in a way that it supports the GEP and overall well-being at work.

The future development related to gender balance in ACTRIS will focus on making sure that all are encouraged to apply for any open positions and that all are given equal opportunities for carrying out any tasks in future ACTRIS-related projects. More details are given in ACTRIS Employment Policy and in ACTRIS Human Resources Strategy.

7 Promoting Gender equality and other dimensions of equality within ACTRIS community

The research field of ACTRIS focuses on physical and chemical phenomena of the atmosphere. These phenomena are not gender-related, and therefore, the concept of gender dimension in research questions is seldom directly applicable.

There are, however, numerous other aspects in ACTRIS where the gender dimension needs to be considered. ACTRIS works on the building of physical access schemes to its Topical Centres and Observational and Exploratory Platforms such that it would allow equal participation of genders as well as equal participation of individuals in other dimensions of equality. It is important that the services built around the facilities enable users and managers in all life situations to be able to work at these prestigious facilities. ACTRIS will also actively support and promote the balance in gender, age, ethnicity, scientific seniority etc. in the technical training of ACTRIS National Facilities and Central Facilities operators, managers, and users.

Attention will be given to the gender aspect and other dimensions of equality when defining the user requirements, identifying, and working with user groups and coordinating internal and external collaborative actions. ACTRIS is aiming to act as a role model in atmospheric research and in the research infrastructure area and to facilitate mentoring and networking opportunities equally. Again, more details about this can be found in ACTRIS Staff Policy and ACTRIS Human Resources Strategy.

8 References

European Commission (2021a). *Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans*. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/876509> 22.8.2023.

ACTRIS ERIC Employment Policy <https://www.actris.eu/documents/actris-eric-documents>

ACTRIS Human Resources Strategy

ACTRIS IMP Deliverable 11.7: *Analysis of gender balance in ACTRIS*. [ACTRIS IMP WP11 D11.7 Analysis of gender balance in ACTRIS](#)