EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN FOR PERIOD 2026-2030

Version 2.0, November 2026

GMI
GREGOR MENDEL INSTITUTE
OF MOLECULAR PLANT BIOLOGY

IMBA
Institute of Molecular Biotechnology
of the Austrian Academy of Sciences

IMP
Research Institute of
Molecular Pathology

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OUR COMMITMENT

At GMI, IMBA, and IMP, we are committed to creating a safe, productive, and inclusive work environment in which all employees can thrive. As such, we consider equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as important values to make our institutes attractive to the top scientists in our respective fields, to promote excellence in science, and to foster a truly diverse and inclusive community.

Our institutes face similar challenges encountered by research institutions around the world, particularly unconscious and implicit bias, and the lack of representation of women and/or minority groups in leadership positions. All three institutes have made efforts to proactively address these challenges, which will be maintained in future as well.

Experiences of inequality are not singular, but shaped by intersecting dimensions, particularly in international research environments. An intersectional perspective is therefore a foundational principle of our approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

However, we recognize that the road to fully implementing equity, diversity, and inclusion is long and requires high management attention. We consequently support this action plan as an opportunity to formalize, streamline, and coordinate our efforts to improve equity and foster a diverse and inclusive workplace.

This EDI Action Plan reflects our commitment and sets out the concrete steps we will take in the period 2026-2030 to work towards our key strategic goals. We aim to further promote an inclusive culture and work environment, ensure equal opportunities for all in terms of professional development and support, strengthen representation in positions of responsibility and leadership, and prevent discrimination, harassment, and bullying of any form.

We commit to implementing the measures described in the EDI Action Plan and provide resources and budget for this purpose. We also commit to communicating the contents of the EDI Action Plan to all employees in our respective institutions and relevant external stakeholders. We will ensure that progress is monitored and reported.

Finally, we view the EDI Action Plan as a living document. To ensure that it meets the needs of participating institutions, we will regularly review the EDI Action Plan and allow for revisions as needed, e.g. addressing the latest guidelines on Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) published by the EU .

All terms used in this document are to be understood as defined in the GMI/IMBA/IMP Anti-discrimination, -harassment, and -bullying policy.

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GENERAL PROVISIONS

PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The participating research institutes are committed to embedding equity and inclusion at GMI, IMBA and IMP. This is primarily the responsibility of institute management and, by extension, their leadership staff, but involves all staff members.

The implementation of this action plan is a joint effort of all employees of the participating institutions, regardless of position or seniority. Consequently, the action plan applies to all employees (whether in scientific, technical, or administrative positions), as well as committee members participating in recruitment processes.

The action plan will be in effect for the period 2026-2030, after which a review will take place.

The appointed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officers (hereinafter referred to as EDI Officers: edi.officers@vbc.ac.at) support and advise on EDI-related matters and provide timely internal and external information upon request.

EDI Officers coordinate the implementation of the actions, provide advice to management and staff, and prepare the annual monitoring report in collaboration with HR. Institute management remains responsible for integrating EDI objectives into strategic decisions and resource allocation, while HR and line managers are responsible for embedding EDI considerations into operational processes.

The Action Plan is regularly evaluated, supplemented, and further developed. Reports (e.g. annual monitoring and progress monitoring reports) are made available to management, all leadership staff, and staff representatives.

OUR VALUES

Excellence: We are dedicated to excellence measured at an international level. We ensure that scientists can carry out their work in a purely science-driven and impartial manner, within the boundaries of good scientific practice and research integrity. We place a high value on fostering and encouraging talented individuals with the potential to engage in the rigorous and exciting scientific endeavors taking place at our institutes. This includes identifying and mentoring promising individuals who may come from underrepresented or underprivileged backgrounds, which is an explicit priority at GMI, IMBA and IMP. We also strive for excellence in science support, administration, and services to create a working environment that enables all employees to realize their full potential.

Equity: We strive to be a workplace that ensures fair treatment, access, and equal opportunity for all employees. Equity is about identifying and removing barriers that have prevented the full participation of underrepresented groups. Improving equity means more justice and fairness within the institutions' processes, as well as communication and sharing of resources.

Diversity: We recognize and value the great diversity of our community. By diversity, we mean the differences among people that encompass all the characteristics that distinguish between a person or group. Dimensions of diversity include, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, background (socioeconomic status, immigration status, etc.), religion or belief, family status (marital, pregnancy and parenthood), age, and disability.

An intersectional perspective underpins our understanding of diversity and equity. It enables us to identify how overlapping identities and structural conditions interact to create specific barriers, and to address these barriers through targeted and equitable measures.

Inclusion: We actively promote an environment in which every individual or group feels welcome, safe, supported, respected, and valued for participation. In doing so, the Institutes are committed to a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment, and bullying of any kind. An inclusive and welcoming workplace culture appreciates differences and offers respect in word and deed to all current and prospective employees, guests, cooperation partners and others associated with the Institutes. In particular, the Institutes recognize that proactively addressing implicit bias is necessary to nurture inclusivity.

Leadership: Individuals in leadership positions, especially group, team, and department leaders, have a special responsibility to advocate for equity and inclusion in their areas because of their role model function and their decision-making responsibilities. We strive to equip leadership personnel with the tools and qualifications necessary to lead effectively and in accordance with this Action Plan.

We acknowledge that power asymmetries are inherent in research organisations. Our values require that these hierarchies are exercised transparently and responsibly and that all staff have access to safe channels to raise concerns (i.e. contact the ombudspersons).

Engaging the scientific community: As centers of excellence research, we are embedded in an international scientific community. We are committed to working towards greater equity and inclusion in this community by proactively advocating our values, engaging with relevant networks, and exchanging ideas with other scientific institutions.

OUR GOALS

The cross-cutting priorities of this Action Plan for the period 2026-2030 are to

- Outline specific objectives we wish to achieve,
- Implement efficient monitoring and evaluation of progress benchmarked against our list of objectives,
- Ensure visibility and awareness of EDI issues at the institutes, and
- Comply with the requirements of funding organizations and regulatory bodies.

The Action Plan pursues seven core strategic objectives which guide the development and implementation of operational measures to foster EDI at the institutes.

- **Organizational culture:** The participating institutes shall promote an inclusive, integrative, and welcoming organizational culture.
- **Work environment:** The participating institutes shall strive to maintain a work environment that is fair, safe, productive, and equitable, where all employees can realize their full potential.
- **Education and awareness:** The participating institutes shall take action to improve awareness of and education on EDI issues at all levels, with special attention given to the role of employees in leadership positions.
- **Prevention of discrimination, harassment, and bullying:** The participating institutes do not tolerate any form of discrimination, including harassment, nor do they tolerate bullying. The Action Plan shall support ongoing efforts to revise, enforce, and share anti-discrimination, -harassment, and -bullying policies to foster a safe work environment for all.
- **Equitable recruitment:** The participating institutes shall take action to improve ongoing efforts and policies for equitable hiring, with special attention given to increase the hiring of women in leadership positions.
- **Accessibility and transparency:** The participating institutes shall strive to make internal policies, documents, and support services more easily accessible and transparent to all employees.
- **Representation:** The Action Plan shall propose actions that enable all employees to voice their needs and have their perspective considered in decision making.

Each core strategic objective is addressed by at least one or several specific actions. An overview of all actions matched against strategic objectives is provided below. The individual actions are further detailed in section 3.

OVERVIEW OF ACTIONS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE SEVEN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Actions \ Objectives	1 Org. culture	2 Work env.	3 Education	4 Anti-discrimination	5 Recruitment	6 Transparency	7 Representation
1 Continuous EDI Training for EDI officers and staff	X	X	X	X			X
2 EDI Events	X		X				
	X	X	X		X		X
3 Review & update anti-discrimination, harassment, and bullying policies	X	X		X		X	
4 Render standard internal documents more accessible & inclusive		X		X		X	
5 Ensure all employees are aware of policies & support services		X	X	X		X	X
6 Apply for external recognition and certification of EDI efforts	X	X			X	X	
7 Ensure equitable recruitment and HR processes				X	X	X	X
8 Formalize structures for efficient implementation & progress monitoring	X			X	X	X	
9 Embedding EDI efforts in the broader community	X		X				X

MONITORING & PROGRESS

The EDI officers will regularly meet to check the progress of the goals of the EDI action plan and will aim to report to management and faculty annually. In addition, upon any changes (e.g. the entry into force of the EU Pay Transparency Directive) of rules and guidelines, the EDI officers can make aware of the respective decision makers.

In accordance with the mandatory requirements of the European Commission (EU Pay Transparency Directive), an annual monitoring and progress report is prepared by June of each year, covering the period from January 1 to December 31 of the previous year.

A summary of the report is presented to senior management and executive staff and later made available on the institute's intranet. The report will include an assessment of progress against the Action Plan goals and recommendations for modification/adjustment of actions, implementation, targets, and/or monitoring indicators, as appropriate.

Raw (underlying) Data will be kept confidential and respect the anonymity of individuals, i.e., disaggregated data must cover a minimum group size of 6 individuals to be included in the public report. The list of indicators to be covered by the monitoring and progress report is provided in Annex 1.

Where quantitative reporting is not possible due to, for example, confidentiality constraints, qualitative data (e.g. anonymous, voluntary survey during offboarding) can be used to complement the analysis and capture intersectional experiences.

If needed, the list of indicators may be adjusted during the annual monitoring process. However, we strive for consistency and continuity to allow assessment of progress over time.

RESOURCES

The participating institutes commit to ensuring the availability of adequate resources and budget for the implementation of the EDI Action Plan 2026-2030. Resources entail personnel, space, and materials, as well as costs for external suppliers.

For the implementation of the EDI Action Plan 2026-2030, personnel resources to the extent of 1 FTE are foreseen. This includes the working time of three appointed EDI Officers, as well as of other staff across the departments involved and functions as detailed in the specific actions in section 3 of this plan. Additionally, the EDI officers receive a dedicated budget of EUR 5.000 per year and institute.

ACTIONS

1 CONTINUOUS EDI TRAINING FOR EDI OFFICERS AND STAFF

Strategic goals	Education and awareness, Organizational culture
Action	Initiate, organize, and provide training opportunities for staff, ensuring ongoing awareness, understanding, and application of equity, diversity, and inclusion principles across the organization. Organize specific external training for EDI officers, Ombudspersons, decision makers and other relevant stakeholders building on the training "Basics of Diversity and Inclusion" organized in 2025. Potential courses on topics could include Equality Instead of Discrimination, Unconscious Bias, Intercultural Competence, Four Generations Under One Roof, Inclusive Leadership. Offer voluntary online EDI training by external providers to all staff.
Timeline	2026-2030
Outcomes	Enhanced awareness of EDI topics, applicable policies, and available support services at the institutes. Common understanding of values across different cultures and backgrounds and expected conduct. Enhanced trust in policies and available support services.
Target Groups	All employees at GMI/IMBA/IMP,
Responsibility	EDI officers

2 EDI EVENTS

Strategic goals	Education and awareness
Action	Include EDI themed events in the institute's events schedules. This may include a variety of formats, such as lectures, seminars, roundtable discussions, and Social Hours. Work with institutional entities (e.g. reps, scientific offices) to embed EDI topics in the existing framework of conferences and events to become stable part of campus programming. Support the EDI voluntary group in their efforts and with their initiatives. From 2027 onwards, at least three EDI-themed events per year will be organized across the institutes.
Timeline	2027-2030 The EDI Event Series was piloted during the first phase of the EDI action plan and should now be adapted based on experiences to become an established and fully integrated part of campus life.
Outcomes	Increased awareness of EDI matters among staff / increased visibility of EDI policies and services available to staff.
Target Groups	All employees at GMI/IMBA/IMP
Responsibility	EDI Officers, EDI Group, Scientific Offices of the Institutes, Institutes representatives

3 REVIEW & UPDATE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND BULLYING POLICIES

Strategic goals	Prevention of discrimination, harassment, and bullying
Action	Regularly review, revise, enforce, and share anti-discrimination, -harassment, and -bullying policies to foster a safe work environment for all. The policies include clear complaints and investigation procedures specifying responsible bodies, timelines, confidentiality safeguards, and protection against retaliation.
Timeline	Review conducted in 2025. Inclusion of updates into the annual review cycle for policies and SOPs at the institutes.
Outcomes	Improved prevention of harassment, discrimination, and bullying. Improved mechanisms for recourse in case of instances of harassment or discrimination. Improved dissemination of policies among staff.
Target groups	All employees at GMI/IMBA/IMP
Responsibility	HR

4 RENDER STANDARD INTERNAL DOCUMENTS MORE ACCESSIBLE & INCLUSIVE

Strategic goals	Accessibility and transparency
Action	Review existing standard internal documents for inclusive language use, accessibility to non-German speakers (e.g. availability of English language translation), and to employees with disabilities (subtitles in videos for the hearing impaired, optimizing written content for the visually impaired, etc.). Priority will be given to core HR and EDI-relevant documents such as employment contracts, pay slips, Codes of Conduct, anti-harassment policies and onboarding materials.
Timeline	2026-2030
Outcomes	Updated standardized internal documents (e.g.: pay slips, contracts, etc.) and websites/communication materials
Target Groups	All employees at GMI/IMBA/IMP
Responsibility	Communications and EHS

5 ENSURE ALL EMPLOYEES ARE AWARE OF POLICIES & SUPPORT SERVICES

Strategic goals	Accessibility and transparency
Action	Dissemination and updating of information on EDI measures, policies & support services in the participating institute websites. Regular EDI related information on the newsblog, every quarter.
Further actions:	Collect information via short surveys as needed, e.g. on mother tongue, satisfaction with parental leave options, general satisfaction with accessibility etc.
Timeline	2026-2030
Outcomes	Improved employer branding. Transparency on EDI efforts, policies & support services at the institutes.
Target Groups	All employees at GMI/IMBA/IMP
Responsibility	Communications in collaboration with EDI officers

6 APPLY FOR EXTERNAL RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION OF EDI EFFORTS

Strategic goals	Accessibility and transparency
Action	Apply for public recognition of effort and certification (provided the required funds can be made available) to enhance EDI as a means to demonstrate the (quality of our) EDI engagement to our international stakeholders.
Timeline	2026-2030
Outcomes	External validation, recognition, and certification of EDI efforts.
Target Groups	Potential candidates, the interested public, all employees at GMI/IMBA/IMP
Responsibility	EDI Officers

7 ENSURE EQUITABLE RECRUITMENT AND HR PROCESSES

Strategic goals	Equitable recruitment, Prevention of discrimination
Action	1. Equitable recruitment procedures: Formulate job postings in a language that is equally attractive to all genders and to people with disabilities; monitor the percentage of applicants by gender and the offer acceptance rate where possible; Seek means to provide guidelines for candidate selection / interview; Review existing recruitment procedures and evaluate the extent to which they are in peril of perpetuating potentially discriminatory practices. 2. EDI in onboarding: Continue to introduce EDI issues and key documents (Code of Conduct, Anti-Discrimination, -Harassment, and -Bullying Policy, EDI Action Plan) in each onboarding process/welcome meeting, ensuring that all new employees receive information on EDI topics on campus. 3. Pay equity analysis as part of the Entgelttransparenz-Richtlinie: HR departments will carry out this analysis annually in line with the latest rules and regulations. Summaries may be included in the report whenever permitted by data protection requirements.
Timeline	2026-2030
Outcomes	1. Sensitize all staff responsible for recruitment decisions to practices for reducing potential discrimination. 2. All new employees are informed and aware of EDI relevant key documents, policies and expectations when joining the respective institute. 3. Discovery of potential shortcomings in existing processes and support services. 4. Assessment of transparent information on pay equity at the institutes.
Target Groups	All employees at GMI/IMBA/IMP responsible for recruitment decisions (HR, recruitment committees, group/team leaders)
Responsibility	HR in collaboration with EDI officers

8 FORMALIZE STRUCTURES FOR EFFICIENT IMPLEMENTATION & PROGRESS MONITORING

Strategic goals	Representation, Accessibility and transparency, Organizational culture
Action	EDI Officers: For the annual monitoring and review process, these are to be supported by HR and, if necessary, by external experts. Create job description to formalize the position. 1. Data collection for progress monitoring: Collect and monitor data as per indicator list in Annex 1 to this document. 2. Staff consultation: Develop and administer a consultation survey on the EDI Action Plan to gather employee feedback. Include EDI relevant questions into existing regularly administered surveys at the institutes (e.g. mental health survey, PhD and post-doc surveys, workplace satisfaction survey).
Timeline	Continuous operation 2026–2030.
Outcomes	1. Ensure adequate resources for implementation of the EDI Action Plan 2. Effective progress monitoring of EDI issues covered in this Action Plan. Compliance with EU requirements. 3. Improved monitoring of employee needs and perceptions of EDI issues at the institutes. Effective progress monitoring
Target Groups	All employees at GMI/IMBA/IMP
Responsibility	EDI officers in collaboration with HR, with support from external experts if needed and with other departments responsible for employee surveys (reps, EHS)

9 EMBEDDING EDI EFFORTS IN THE BROADER COMMUNITY

Strategic goals	Representation, Organizational culture
Action	Engage annually with and build connections to other EDI offices and initiatives at ÖAW, UBB, IST, or similar institutions. Foster a culture of exchange and mutual learning.
Timeline	2026-2030
Outcomes	In the same way that internal diversity enhances workplace climate and sparks new ideas, fostering links with other institutes will broaden perspectives and support shared growth.
Target Groups	Other EDI officers/initiatives
Responsibility	EDI Officers

ANNEXES: LIST OF INDICATORS FOR PROGRESS MONITORING

INDICATOR	DESCRIPTION	DATA PROVIDED BY...
Employment by contract	Staff by gender, nationality and form of contract (fixed term, permanent)	HR
Employment by working time	Staff by gender, nationality and working hours (full time, part time)	HR
Employment by function	Staff by gender, nationality and function (Clusters: WTAS - Wiss, Techn Admin, Sonstige)	HR
On parental leave	Staff on parental leave by gender, function (WTAS), and duration (months)	HR
Hires by function	Number of hires by gender, nationality and function) (to enable comparison across different roles and levels of the organization)	HR
Candidates Group Leader Searches	Aggregate number of applications for group leader positions by gender, nationality	Scientific Office (IMBA; GMI; IMP)
Grant applications submitted	Total number of grant applications submitted by gender of main proposal author	Grant Management
Grant application success rate	Success rate of grant applications by gender of main proposal author	Grant Management
Service on TAC committees	Average number of TAC committees that faculty serve on by gender	VBC Training
First author publications	Number of publications by gender of first author (excluding pre-prints)	Library
Discrimination, harassment & bullying	Number of reported incidents of discrimination, harassment, and bullying	Ombudspersons, compliance committee

[1] All indicators are broken down per institute


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