



Gender  
Equality  
Plan

## Inhaltsverzeichnis

1	Preamble.....	3
2	Objectives of the Gender Equality Plan .....	4
3	Process .....	5
4	Key Elements of the Gender Equality Plan (Measures) .....	6
4.1	Objective 1: Work-life balance and appreciative organizational culture .....	6
4.1.1	Work-life balance and reconciliation of work and family life .....	6
4.1.2	Appreciative organizational culture.....	6
4.2	Objective 2: Gender balance in leadership and decision-making.....	7
4.2.1	Establishment of Gender Equality Officers and Gender Task Force .....	7
4.2.2	Fostering female leadership .....	7
4.3	Objective 3: Gender equality in recruitment and career progression.....	8
4.3.1	Gender-sensitive recruiting .....	8
4.3.2	Fostering female internships and scientific theses.....	8
4.3.3	Gender sensitive career planning .....	8
4.3.4	Training and education opportunities.....	9
4.4	Objective 4: Integration of the gender dimension into research content.....	10
4.4.1	Gender and diversity in research teams .....	10
4.4.2	Gender and diversity in research projects .....	10
4.5	Objective 5: Prevention of gender-based discrimination, including sexual harassment .....	10
4.5.1	Creation of company-wide awareness for the topics gender and diversity.....	10
4.5.2	Creation of anonymous contact points and safe environments.....	11
5	Continuous Progress Monitoring .....	12
5.1	Progress Reports .....	12
5.2	Gender Equality Surveys.....	12
5.3	equalitA Seal Award .....	12
6	Budget and Resources .....	13
7	Outreach .....	13
8	Signature.....	14

## 1 Preamble

Diversity is defined as “the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders and sexual orientations.” Within its company philosophy, RISC Software GmbH (RISC) adheres to this definition and strives to create equal opportunities, independent from gender, age, disabilities, cultural backgrounds and more.

Realizing that there is a lack of diversity in the field of information technologies, RISC has actively taken on a long-term strategy to initially increase the number of female employees in the company through several research projects. The projects FUTURISC and FEMpowerED@RISC have succeeded in increasing the visibility of “Women in IT” in general and actively increased the quota of women employed at RISC Software GmbH from 20% to currently 31%. Shifting to a more inclusive outlook on gender equality, RISC is taking a next step to a broader, more inclusive take on diversity. Thus, merging from a binary perspective on gender, RISC strives to aspire inclusiveness for all genders and further establish an appreciative environment that accounts to all aspects of the definition of diversity.

Furthermore, RISC is pursuing the long-term establishment and development of a diversity strategy in the company through the creation of company-wide awareness to topics related to gender and diversity. Therefore, a core team focusing on gender and diversity, led by two Gender Equality Officers and with commitment from Human Resources, Marketing and Management will be established. This Gender Equality Plan will serve as the basis and guidebook for all related activities, reassuring key performance indicators are upheld and the topics of gender and diversity are well established at RISC.

An inspiring working environment appreciative of employees, independent of gender, age, disabilities, and cultural backgrounds is sought. Regular awareness activities will assure a respectful environment for all employees. To create equal opportunities not only at RISC, but also help increase the number of women in STEM professions, RISC will actively participate in outreach programs with other companies and research institutions. Moreover, RISC will also closely collaborate with universities to encourage female students to further pursue STEM-related careers.

## 2 Objectives of the Gender Equality Plan

Diversity is a key element for successful teams. Several studies indicate that diversity in teams increases creativity and innovation as well as problem solving and facilitates higher employee engagement which, overall leads to higher profits<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the following objectives will be pursued to achieve diversity and gender equality:

- Objective 1: Work-life balance and organizational culture
  - 1.1 Work-life balance and reconciliation of work and family life
  - 1.2 Appreciative corporate culture
- Objective 2: Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
  - 2.1 Establishment of Gender Equality Officers and Gender Task Force
  - 2.2 Fostering female leadership
- Objective 3: Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
  - 3.1 Gender-sensitive recruiting
  - 3.2 Fostering female internships and scientific theses
  - 3.3 Gender-sensitive career planning
  - 3.4 Training and education opportunities
- Objective 4: Integration of the gender dimension into research content
  - 4.1 Gender and diversity in research teams
  - 4.2 Gender and diversity in research projects
- Objective 5: Prevention of gender-based discrimination, including sexual harassment
  - 5.1 Creation of company-wide awareness for the topics gender and diversity
  - 5.2 Creation of anonymous contact points

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.managers.org.uk/knowledge-and-insights/listicle/the-five-business-benefits-of-a-diverse-team/>

### 3 Process

The topics gender and diversity will be addressed in an ongoing and iterative process, guaranteeing that all necessary activities are undertaken to assure all gender-related objectives.

1. **Definition phase:** Within this phase, goals, measures, and indicators are defined by the Gender Officers and integrated in the gender and diversity strategy. Feedback and input are collected throughout the company. As part of the iterative process, goals, measures, and indicators as defined in this document are updated.
2. **Planning phase:** Based on the previous phase, appropriate measures are planned.
3. **Implementation phase:** The planned measures are implemented within a predefined period of time.
4. **Evaluation / analysis phase / monitoring phase:** The success of the implemented measures will be monitored and data to evaluate the defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are collected. The results are communicated within RISC (e.g., periodically at company breakfasts).

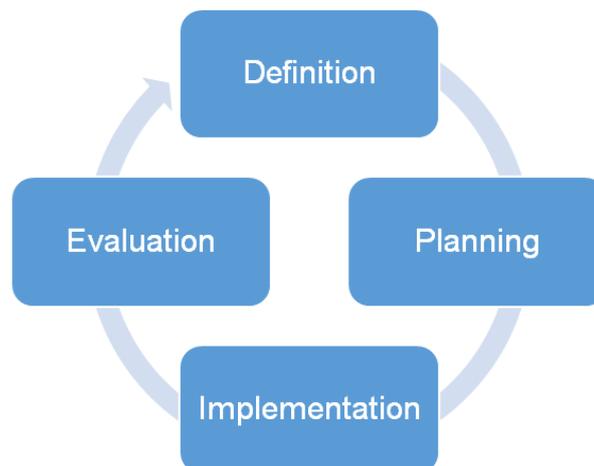


Figure 1. Gender Equality Process at RISC Software GmbH

## 4 Key Elements of the Gender Equality Plan (Measures)

It is important to RISC to offer its employees an appreciative working atmosphere and individual development prospects. By promoting employee qualifications and satisfaction, existing core competencies in the various research areas can be deepened and expanded.

A key value of RISC is the promotion of equal opportunities, which is why active measures are implemented to create gender-balanced ratios and working conditions. The **proportion of women** at RISC is currently (at the beginning of 2022) about **one third**, which is slightly higher than that in non-university scientific and technical research in Austria of 27%<sup>2</sup>. Building upon this promising foundation, the goal is to create equal opportunities for all genders in non-university scientific research and, amongst others implement targeted measures to promote the careers of women in research and technology.

The specific measures that contribute to achieving the objectives listed in chapter 2 *Objectives of the Gender Equality Plan* are described below.

### 4.1 Objective 1: Work-life balance and appreciative organizational culture

#### 4.1.1 Work-life balance and reconciliation of work and family life

**Work-life balance** and enabling family planning are supported proactively and through long-term perspectives and are addressed in the working conditions (e.g., by respecting care obligations). In addition, flexible working time models, home office options and largely flexible vacation planning make a significant contribution to the work-life balance and the reconciliation of career and family. Furthermore, the possibility of taking parental leave for both parents is actively supported.

#### 4.1.2 Appreciative organizational culture

For RISC, employee satisfaction plays a central role, which is why the corporate culture is characterized by **openness, appreciation, and tolerance**. RISC is made up of a heterogeneous employee base, which is why gender and diversity are important for an inclusive working environment and why adequate and respectful interaction will become even more important in the future.

An appreciative working atmosphere is ensured, by the fact that employees at all hierarchical levels communicate respectfully with each other. They can communicate their needs and suggestions that are also dealt with by the management level, so employees have the **feeling of “being heard”**. Mutual support and teamwork are other key factors in providing a constructive working environment. In addition, the flat organizational structure facilitates short decision-making paths and a rapid transfer of responsibility.

---

<sup>2</sup> Wroblewski, A., Striedinger, A., 2018. Gleichstellung in Wissenschaft und Forschung in Österreich. Bundesministerium Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung.

Numerous company-wide measures are implemented to promote **cohesion among colleagues**. These include annual employee events (summer party, ski days, company outing, etc.) as well as regular leisure and sports activities such as cooking together, climbing, hiking, yoga, games evenings or regulars' tables.

## 4.2 Objective 2: Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

### 4.2.1 Establishment of Gender Equality Officers and Gender Task Force

RISC is currently in the progress to nominate **two internal Gender Equality Officers** which form a pillar in the company to ensure the implementation of the measures. They will participate in various further training measures on the topic of gender and diversity and subsequently act as contact persons for gender-sensitive topics. In addition, the further development of the company-wide Gender Equality Plan and its implementation is planned, and various measures will be taken for generation management and to further sensitize employees to gender and diversity. As experts in the field of gender and diversity, the Gender Equality Officers are contact points for all gender-relevant issues.

In addition, the establishment of an internal **Gender Task Force** is planned. Supporting the two Gender Officers, it will consist of employees from Human Resources, Marketing, Management, and at least one employee from each of the research departments. The aim is to ensure that the interests of all units are considered, the topics of gender and diversity are treated with equal importance within all units and that decisions can be made efficiently by involving the management level.

### 4.2.2 Fostering female leadership

Continuing education opportunities are offered to all employees, with a special focus on gender equality and the career advancement of women. In the FEMtech project **FemPowerED@RISC** (FFG Success Story<sup>3</sup>) RISC implemented measures to strengthen the potential of female employees and integrated a mentoring concept into the onboarding process. Measures for targeted professional development for female employees and the encouragement of **women to take on leadership roles** were also implemented. Fostering equal opportunities is a high priority in day-to-day work. Regarding career opportunities, all forms of discrimination, for example due to age, gender, or ethnic origin, are not tolerated.

**Women** are and will be encouraged to take on **management positions and (project) leadership tasks**. To this end, both external and internal training sessions are regularly held on leadership issues such as project management, employee leadership, conflict management, (project) controlling, or R&D applications. The aim is for more female employees to successfully take the step into managing research and customer projects.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ffg.at/FemPowerEDatRISC>

## 4.3 Objective 3: Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

### 4.3.1 Gender-sensitive recruiting

To sensitize both existing and potential employees to gender and diversity in recruiting, a **guideline for gender-sensitive recruiting and employer branding** is developed by the gender task force and in close collaboration between management and HR. For example, Gender-neutral language and communication is already implemented in the formulation of job advertisements, so that any discrimination is excluded in advance. In case of equal qualifications, women are given preference.

Furthermore, women are specifically encouraged to apply at RISC, especially for management and leading positions. This is personally encouraged by employees at job fairs and other student-related events. To further the diversity among RISC employees, international applicants will be encouraged to apply and funding opportunities to ease relocation to Austria will be sought.

### 4.3.2 Fostering female internships and scientific theses

To support the training of highly qualified personnel in Upper Austria, RISC offers the opportunity to do internships and thus gain valuable experience in research work. Students are also supported in writing **scientific theses** on current research questions in the fields of industry, logistics and medicine.

Several **internships** focusing on endorsing female interns within STEM professions within the so-called FEMtech program of FFG will be applied to. These programs assist in conveying the company-wide signal for the targeted career promotion of women in research and technology. Especially, female students and young female technicians are given the opportunity to get to know RISC and to start a career supported by mentors. Since the low percentage of women in technology, and especially in software development, already begins in computer science-related studies and thus in vocational training, it is an important goal to introduce young people and young women to the fields of activity of technicians and researchers by presenting typical job descriptions of employees of the company.

An attractive training of young researchers is ensured by integration in research projects and by an **onboarding and mentoring process**. This includes, on the one hand, one selected key researcher each, who accompanies the induction phase and provides specialist support. On the other hand, there is an administrative mentor who explains all company-specific issues. Thus, the mentor ensures good integration in the company right from the start.

### 4.3.3 Gender sensitive career planning

Despite its flat hierarchies, RISC offers its employees a wide range of career opportunities.

The supervision of **internships** has proven very successful in recent years, as it gives future employees a good insight into the work at RISC. For interns, this opportunity represents a kind of **career springboard**, since RISC supports interns who wish to subsequently write a scientific thesis (bachelor's and master's thesis or dissertation) on an exciting topic and thus continue the joint work and benefit from the respective levels of knowledge and experience.

The individual professional career is supported by numerous qualification measures. In addition, employees are supported in writing and completing **scientific theses**, dissertations, and postdoctoral theses in connection with their research activities.

To ensure the highest possible level of transparency, there is an internal career model. It precisely defines the skills and competences required as well as the level of responsibility necessary for progressing to the next career level. The flat hierarchy, open and appreciative communication as well as annual appraisal interviews enable direct exchange and individually adjusted career paths.

#### 4.3.4 Training and education opportunities

Technological progress and a wide variety of challenges allow our employees to take on varied tasks, work on exciting projects, and immerse themselves in promising areas of activity, thus constantly expanding and deepening their knowledge. Thanks to its economic continuity and long-term existence, RISC offers its existing and new employees **stable and secure jobs**. Instead of relying on temporary employment, RISC aims to retain its personnel in the long term and to support the achievement of **individual development goals**.

To further increase and maintain the professional and scientific excellence of its employees in the long term, and thus also to ensure its own competitiveness, RISC offers its employees a comprehensive range of **training and education** opportunities. These measures are already firmly anchored in the company and are constantly being developed further by those responsible. Accordingly, each employee receives a certain number of “**credits**”, which can be used to finance further training measures and/or in the form of time compensation (e.g., attendance at a lecture at the university). In addition to the opportunity to participate in two to three company-wide continuing education programs each year, employees are also free to make their own suggestions and requests regarding continuing education and to participate in them in consultation with their supervisors. To ensure an exchange of experiences and quality assurance, employees are invited to give their feedback in a short questionnaire after participation. To guarantee that the **individual development goals** defined in the annual employee appraisals are achieved, targeted training and education measures are planned together with the supervisor.

RISC takes measures to promote individual interests and to support its employees in achieving their goals. If it is possible from a resource point of view and relevant for the research work, employees are enabled to set **individual technical focuses**, to deal with new scientific topics and to try out different solution methods.

In addition, the internal scientific discourse of the employees of all research departments is promoted within the “**Lunch Lectures**”, which take place once a month. These internal appointments include a previously determined subject-specific lecture and a subsequent joint discussion, enabling an important transfer of knowledge and joint problem solving.

## 4.4 Objective 4: Integration of the gender dimension into research content

### 4.4.1 Gender and diversity in research teams

The consideration of gender aspects also concerns RISC specific topics, such as the treatment of **gender and diversity in research activities**. Diverse compositions of project and research teams assure to cover a wide range of topics and potential consequences for both, research topics up to end-users. This diversity is not limited to gender, but also includes age, sexual orientation, disabilities, ethnical, religious or social backgrounds, as well as professional field of expertise (e.g., by increasing the number of key researchers at RISC with diverse backgrounds). Thus, it is sought to create diverse and interdisciplinary teams within RISC but also in professional collaborations.

### 4.4.2 Gender and diversity in research projects

Gender and diversity aspects are also addressed in the content-related research work of RISC. If possible and relevant, any differences in terms of gender, age, ethnic groups, etc. are examined in the research projects, topics and use cases. **Gender-relevant differences** are included accordingly in the research design and in the selection of data. For example, different skin colors, genders, or age groups are considered when modeling three-dimensional patient-specific avatars. When collecting data and compiling datasets, a balance regarding gender and age of the patients is ensured. Where relevant, gender is also considered in the research activities in the data material.

Secondly, the research topics treated within RISC hold topics potentially relevant to gender and (e.g., the potential of discrimination by algorithms). Therefore, workshops on identifying these topics across all research activities will be conducted.

## 4.5 Objective 5: Prevention of gender-based discrimination, including sexual harassment

### 4.5.1 Creation of company-wide awareness for the topics gender and diversity

The planned measures include annual gender and diversity **workshops for all employees** of RISC, special management training on the topics of gender and diversity, and general monitoring of the development of measures. Further measures are planned and implemented at the discretion of and in consultation with experts (e.g., workshops on the promotion of women in the company or in the individual research departments).

RISC ensures the use of **gender-equitable language** in internal and external communication. A binding guideline for corporate communications is being developed and will define the implementation for gender-appropriate language and a gender-balanced selection of images.

#### 4.5.2 Creation of anonymous contact points and safe environments

RISC has **zero tolerance for** any form of sexual harassment or other forms of **harassment**. Any reason for concerns can be anonymously reported to either the Gender Equality Officers or directly to the management and will be handled diligently and with utmost care.

It is planned to set up a dedicated **e-mail inbox** as well as **physical box** so that employees can contact a trusted person with their problems and concerns, if needed also anonymously. Hence, a **contact point** will be set up, where these concerns can be dropped in the form of small pieces of paper into a so-called gender concern box. This box is emptied regularly by the Gender Equality Officers and the issues are dealt with utmost care.

In RISC, a so-called **coaching roulette** has been implemented. If one has problems in the company, at work, interpersonally or privately, one can turn to a trusted person with whom these problems can be openly discussed. The conversation remains between the two people and serves to obtain advice and an outside opinion.

To promote internal networking between female employees and to be able to openly address sensitive topics, the regularly held **RISC FEMclub** was introduced. The FEMclub takes place at regular intervals and promotes internal exchange among female employees. Current personal concerns can be addressed openly, and everyone can be sure that the topics discussed will be dealt with confidentially. In addition, specific areas are identified in which gender equality can be further promoted at RISC. Further, concrete ideas and actions can be implemented to promote gender equality. The RISC FEMclub will be revised, adapted to the latest standards, and expanded to include the dimension of diversity.

## 5 Continuous Progress Monitoring

The achievement of the objectives of the RISC Gender Equality Plan as well as the evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures taken are subject to **continuous progress monitoring**.

### 5.1 Progress Reports

Each year, the Gender Officers will discuss the status of objectives in the GEP as well as the measures within the Gender Task force and with the managing director and selected employees. In this way, deviations of key indicators can be identified, and countermeasures can be initiated to ensure that the objectives are achieved. In adapting with progress and changing circumstances, objectives will be revised, or new objectives added.

The results of these meetings are recorded in a **written progress report**. To ensure transparency, the results of this regular monitoring will be communicated to all employees as part of the first quarterly company assembly.

### 5.2 Gender Equality Surveys

The results of the quarterly **employee satisfaction surveys** are an important indicator for RISC and enable it to derive targeted measures for the continuous improvement of working conditions and to address the feedback and wishes of employees. In the future, a separate question section on gender equality and diversity will also be implemented as part of this survey.

### 5.3 equalitA Seal Award

In the medium-term, RISC is striving for the **equalitA**<sup>4</sup> seal award from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs that proves the implementation of measures for equal opportunities, equality, and fairness. This seal of quality honors companies that:

- promote women within the company,
- ensure gender equality within the company,
- promote women's careers and make them visible, thereby supporting professional equality for both genders both within their own company and beyond.

---

<sup>4</sup> Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs, n.d. equalitA [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.bmdw.gv.at/Themen/Wirtschaftsstandort-Oesterreich/equalitA.html> (accessed 1.4.22).

## 6 Budget and Resources

In cooperation with the controlling staff, the Gender Officers develop a draft budget each year, allocating working hours for the Gender Equality Officers, the Gender Taskforce as well as training, awareness and prevention measures to be implemented. The budget will be approved by the managing director. Employees are allowed to participate in selected meetings and activities (e.g., training, information events). The budget bases on the costs for the planned activities as well as the necessary resources (personnel costs, material costs, use of facilities, travel costs). Additional budget is provided by the “FEMtech Karriere” program of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (“Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft”, FFG), for the funded project RISCversity (project number 892247) for which a commitment has already been made for the years 2022 and 2023.

## 7 Outreach

As part of gender equality measures, public relations activities are planned. The aim is to further increase the **visibility of RISC as an attractive employer for women in technology and people with diverse backgrounds** and to make the promotion of gender and diversity visible to external parties. Presentations in educational institutions are held to directly address potential new female employees, with the aim of further increasing the quota of highly qualified women in the company.

RISC will also take an active part in encouraging diversity in STEM professions, particularly in non-university research. Therefore, existing networks – e.g. within Upper Austria in general or locally in Hagenberg will be used and further extended to support this cause. RISC will actively contribute to mentoring programs for students and young professionals and collaborate to create a strong network for female IT professionals. In order to achieve these goals, RISC employees will, among others, support educational institutions such as universities or companies through teaching and outreach activities. As RISC is also engaged in creating modern and flexible working environments, collaborations in this direction – with a particular focus on gender and diversity – such as the project “Digitales Arbeiten in der Krise” by ÖGUT<sup>5</sup> will also be supported in the future.

A further aim is to develop, communicate and disseminate a **company-wide guideline for communication and public relations** regarding diversity and gender-equitable values to anchor them in the corporate culture. Furthermore, the focus is on iteratively improving the equality plan within the framework of **experience exchange rounds** between companies and (research) institutions and allowing other companies to benefit from this. RISC is to take on a pioneering role and provide support for others in this regard. This should also promote networking and the exchange of female employees. Particularly in the local area (Softwarepark Hagenberg, research landscape Upper Austria, partner companies in Upper Austria), existing contacts are to be used. First, a company-wide guideline for communication and public relations regarding diversity and gender-equitable values is developed with the broadest possible participation of employees. Later, an exchange of experiences with other companies

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oegut.at/de/projekte/gender/digitales-arbeiten-in-der-krise.php>

will take place. Furthermore, the relevance of gender equality and diversity is emphasized through accompanying communication measures, both internally and externally.

## 8 Signature

Hagenberg, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022

**RISC Software GmbH**  
A-4232 Hagenberg, Softwarepark 32a  
Tel.: +43 7236 93028  
office@risc-software.at, www.risc-software.at

---

DI Wolfgang Freiseisen  
(CEO RISC Software GmbH)