



GENDER EQUALITY PLAN



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1. Preface

The Consorzio per Valutazioni Biologiche e Farmacologiche - Gender Equality Plan (CVBF's GEP) is a programmatic document that looks at the next three years (2023-2025) with the aim to implement actions and projects to favour the reduction of gender asymmetry and, at the same time, allows the enhancement of all diversities.

Gender equality is a fundamental value for the European Union (EU), and one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals¹, which in addition to promoting economic development, contributes to the overall wellness as well as to the creation of a more inclusive and equitable Europe.

As a matter of fact, literature reports the persistence of stereotypes and prejudices leading to gender bias/discrimination² where women and men tend to concentrate in certain scientific fields (horizontal segregation). The stereotypical subject choices of students are therefore a real concern³. For instance, while women are more likely to be found in fields like social sciences and humanities, men are more inclined to study, teach, and/or research topics related to engineering or technology. It is also noticed that top hierarchical positions are more frequently occupied by men (vertical segregation)⁴ (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-academia-and-research-gear-tool>).

As laid out in the European Commission's *Communication for a Reinforced European Research Area* (2012), the EU Member States are encouraged to i) remove legal and/or other barriers in the recruitment, retention, and career progression of women researchers while fully complying with EU laws on gender

¹ [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)

² Miller, D. I., Eagly, A. H., & Linn, M. C. (2015). Women's representation in science predicts national gender-science stereotypes: Evidence from 66 nations. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 107(3), 631–644. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000005>

³ Triventi M (2010). Something changes, something not. Long-term trends in gender segregation of fields of study in Italy. *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education* 2(2), 47-80. <https://doi.org/10.14658/pupj-ijse-2010-2-3>

⁴ Poczatková, B., & Rybakova, P. (2017). Gender inequality in the field of science and research. *Journal of International Studies* Vol, 10(1).



equality (Directive 2006/54/EC) to address gender imbalances in decision-making processes; ii) ensure that at least 40% of the underrepresented sex participates in committees which are involved in recruitment/career progression, and in establishing and evaluating research programs (EIGE - <https://eige.europa.eu/>).

Moreover, in conjunction with the Italian Directive n. 2/2019, issued by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Minister for Public Administration and Undersecretary Delegate for Equal Opportunities – Public Administrations must promote budgetary analyses which show how much of an Administration budget is addressed to women, to men, and to both. Also, the directive expects that the preparation of the gender balance sheets referred to the art. 38 of the law n. 196 / 2009 and to the *circolare della Ragioneria generale dello Stato n. 9 of 29 March 2019*, become a consolidated practice in the social reporting activities of administrations.

It should be underlined that the GEP is proposed as a flexible tool to be built considering characteristics and needs of each research organisation. GEP is a document in constant evolution and so subject to future additions and adjustments.

The GEP is the principal tool used by the European Commission (EC) to drive institutional change by identifying strategies for talent development, governance, allocation of research funding, leadership, decision-making, and research. It is an official document that includes a set of actions aimed at:

1. Conducting impact assessment/audits of procedures and practices to identify post-gender bias.
2. Identifying and implementing innovative strategies to correct any bias.
3. Setting targets and monitoring progress via indicators.



The CVBF's GEP follows the guidelines of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE- <https://eige.europa.eu/>); furthermore, it complies with domestic and European regulations.

The CVBF's GEP is the result of studies, analyses, and consultation broken up into different phases. It reports a strategy for the three next years 2023-2025, whereas an internal evaluation will take place every year. Its primary objective is to ensure that CVBF is a safe place for everyone, where diversity is free of discrimination and equality is respected. CVBF is fully committed to translating such principles into actions in order to ensure unhindered career progresses for all.

An analysis phase has been performed for the period 2016-2021 in which sex-disaggregated data were collected and analysed, in addition procedures and practices were critically assessed with the aim of detecting gender inequalities and gender bias.

From a data management operational point of view, the scientific analysis was carried out exclusively on appropriately anonymized aggregated data, in full compliance with current legislation on personal data confidentiality,⁵ and for the only scientific purposes related to the implementation of this specific document. The CVBF's GEP is the result of an engaging process from an enlarged working group represented by its management team together with its research, administrative, and technical staffs.

The analysis phase has been followed by a planning one in which objectives have been defined, targets have been set, actions and measures to ameliorate the identified issues have been decided, and timelines agreed upon. Linked to each expected objective, actions to be carried out over the next few years have been

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR)



identified, at the same time, the relative monitoring indicators to achieve the set results were set up.

During the preparation of this CVBF GEP, the working team took into consideration a fact: in CVBF the higher percentage of workers are women. This picture perfectly mirrors what was reported by recent analysis in research and development contexts, conducted in Italy where the female presence in no-profit organizations exceeds half of the employed (ref: EUROSTAT: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/RD_P_PERSOCC_custom_649643/default/table?lang=en).



2. CVBF

2.1 Organisation, mission, and activities

CVBF is a not-for-profit leading research organization founded in 2000, registered as a Contract Research Organization (CRO) since 2002, and recognised as a legal entity with limited liability since 2004. Current members of the consortium are:

- Fondazione per la Ricerca Farmacologica Gianni Benzi Onlus
- Mediterranea – Associazione per lo sviluppo locale
- TEDDY – European Network of Excellence for Paediatric Research
- Università degli Studi di Bari 'Aldo Moro'

CVBF mission is to facilitate and accelerate the development of medical products with particular attention to special populations, such as paediatric and rare diseases patients.

Several CVBF activities are conducted in the context of EU-funded projects; however, CVBF provides full CRO services to any category of Sponsors (e.g. Academia, Industry, Payers) and for any type of product (e.g., drug, ATMP, medical device).

CVBF is registered as a non-commercial Sponsor of clinical trials (CTs) at the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and at the Italian Medicine Agency (Agenzia Italiana del Farmaco, AIFA). Moreover, CVBF is the coordinator of- European Paediatric Translational <https://eptri.eu/Research Infrastructure> (EPTRI, <https://eptri.eu/>) aimed at *i)* facilitating basic, preclinical, and translational research in paediatric medicines discovery and development *ii)* providing access to key technologies, standardised models, and analytical tools and expertise. EPTRI is a new research infrastructure composed of 114 Institutions coming from 26 EU and non-EU Countries.

CVBF has several headquarters, two in Italy and one in Albania. The activities performed in Bari focus on research, development, and innovation while in Pavia



a full range of CRO activities and services are delivered. CVBF's branch of Tirana acts as a CRO for the conduct of GCP (Good Clinical Practice) CTs supporting pharmaceutical companies willing to invest in research in Albania.

Today CVBF counts on its highly qualified and multidisciplinary team characterized by different international professional figures with specific skills and background. CVBF team members work all together in a stimulating environment to achieve its objectives.

CVBF acts in the following macro-areas⁶:

Clinical Research - The activities are focused on the development and the application of innovative methodologies in CTs for small populations as well as the management of interventional, non-interventional, health technology assessment, pharmacoeconomic studies, and disease registries.

Research and Innovation - CVBF is partnering in several national and EU research networks aimed at facilitating the transfer of know-how at different levels, to strengthening scientific excellence and promoting international research.

Training and Advocacy - CVBF performs research and education in the pharmaceutical field integrating regulatory, ethical, clinical, epidemiological, economical, methodological, and statistical expertise. CVBF promotes patients' empowerment and advocacy in clinical research, favouring awareness on research and innovation topics and identifying unmet medical needs.

2.2 Family Audit Certification

On June 22nd 2021, CVBF adopted the Family Audit certification to ensure a family-friendly work environment and taking a better care of the family-related needs of its employees. This Family Audit certification is a management tool adopted on a

⁶ For more details: <https://www.cvbf.net/our-activities/>



voluntary basis by organisations, including private companies and public and non-profit bodies, that has the purpose of certifying a constant commitment to a favourable work-life balance. By adopting this certification, CVBF has started a virtuous circle of continuous improvement with the introduction of innovative organisational solutions, such as flexible work hours, smart working, and a truly culture of work-life conciliation.

CVBF has developed its own Family Audit Plan, which consists of 6 distinct micro-areas, each assigned to different resources, and 11 fields of investigation on several activities. The 6 micro-areas and the expected results are here summarised below:

a) Work organisation

Thanks to the actions that have been put in place in this area, the overall expected results are:

- Holiday time planning. Early ahead identification of all the needed days off requested by the employees to achieve a balance between family needs and work harmony in a win-win perspective.
- Flexible work timeframe. Such distribution over the 12 hours day helps employees to reach a high level of gratification where family and work needs are met.
- Get to know each other. Establishing personal connections among employees support and increasing their motivation and the overall corporate well-being thanks to the sharing of know-how and knowledge.

b) Company culture: Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Management

This area is expected to achieve the following actions:

- Regular meetings of the Management board focused on work-life balance to develop and consolidate the CVBF philosophical organisational culture toward its conciliation approach.



- Sharing and adopting different skills development measures in line with the work-life balance and needs.

c) Company Empathy philosophy

This area aims at acquiring the personal needs of all employees, including the most introverted ones, with respect to their hardships. Level of gratification and expectations related to work-life balance are taken into consideration.

d) Company welfare / People caring

The following company benefits will be offered:

- Baby bonus to support and eventually increase the number of employees-mothers in the workforce.
- Prize assignment based on career progress, achievement of goals, and fidelity.
- Economic compensation to support employees during their difficult times (e.g., health problems of a close relative). Holidays/work permits will be used, and an economic benefit will be provided.
- Family involvement in social events (e.g., lunches, dinners, other) organized by the company to share some good quality of community time.

e) Territorial welfare

- Family sustainability through the organization of creative, educational, and cultural initiatives for the CVBF's families and for all people who are interested in joining them.



- Territorial work-life balance to promote and disseminate the work-life balance CVBF measures with the City/Region institutions where the company operates.

f) New technologies

- ICT and Digitalization to make work-life easier, especially when it comes to smart working.



3. Analysis Phase

CVBF has set up a working group for the realization of its GEP. The goal of this working group was to provide as much accurate context analysis as possible, to obtain a truthful picture of the main gender characteristics within the profiles and career paths. At the same time, specific activities have been planned to collect and analyse the CVBF actions put in place to support equal opportunities among its staff as stated in this document. This analysis will be the precondition for further contributions to ameliorate the CVBF gender policies. In such perspective, the CVBF GEP proposes to integrate all the organization's strategic planning documentation. In particular, the data reported in this document are referred to the period between 2016 and 2021 (unless otherwise specified) and are reported as absolute numbers to allow an easier comparison over the years. For the analysis purpose, the CVBF's staff has been clustered in several groups based on the different roles and contracts.

3.1 Overview of the staff framework over the period 2016-2021

Figure 1 illustrates the number of male and female employees at CVBF over the timeframe 2016-2021. The number of male employees slightly decreased from 15 in 2016 to 10 in 2017, then the level remained stable through 2018 and 2019 and dropped to 8 employees in 2021. On the other hand, the number of female employees is relatively high with 34 employees in 2016 and 35 in 2021. In conclusion, between 2016 and 2021, the number of men decreased, whereas the number of women remained relatively high with small fluctuations through this 6 years interval.

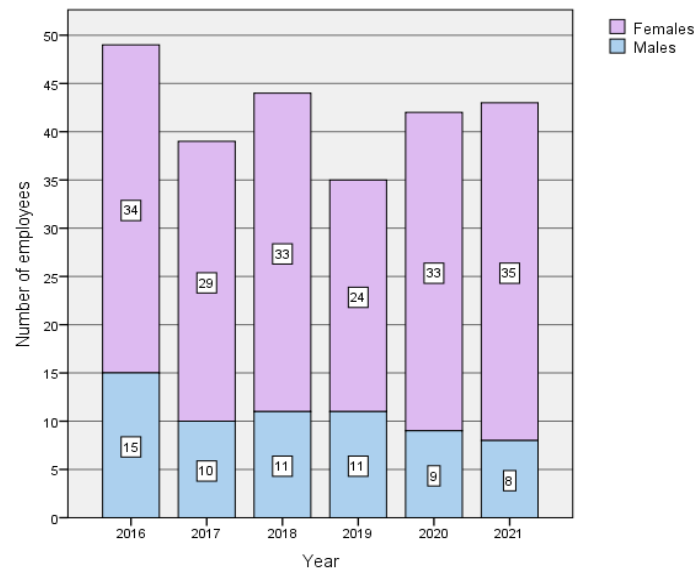


Figure 1. Distribution of CVBF's staff by gender and year (2016-2021)

The CVBF's staff has also been analysed regarding the **gender composition in the different roles and over time (2016-2021)**. For this purpose, the CVBF's staff has been clustered into 4 groups: senior management, middle management, researchers, and in-line staff (*Figure 2*).

The number of men and women employed in senior management over time is relatively the same. As the number of women decreases from 7 in 2016 to 2 in 2021, the number of men decreases as well from 6 in 2016 to 3 in 2021. Overall, the number of men employed as senior managers is slightly higher than the number of women in the same position in 2021. Furthermore, the number of middle management employees is related only to women throughout the considered time period, starting with 2 female employees in 2016 and increasing to 4 in 2021.

Most of the CVBF's staff is made up of researchers/operational staff, in line with the core activities of the institution. From the data set in *Figure 2*, most of these employees are female; their number dropped from 20 in 2016 to 14 in 2019 to steady increase to 23 in 2021. On the other hand, the number of males employees is relatively low, starting at 8 in 2016 and decreasing to 4 in 2021. The number of



women employed as researcher/operational staff is almost 6 times higher than number of men in the same position in 2021. Finally, *Figure 2* represents a comparative diagram of in-line staff by gender and by year. The number of females is relatively higher compared to number of males for the considered period (2016-2021). During the last 6 years, there were small fluctuations in the number of females, ranging from 5 in 2016 to 6 in 2021. On the contrary, the number of men was steady very low, attesting as average to 1 male employee over the analysed 6-years period. In summary, for every male employee there are 5 or 6 female employees each year.

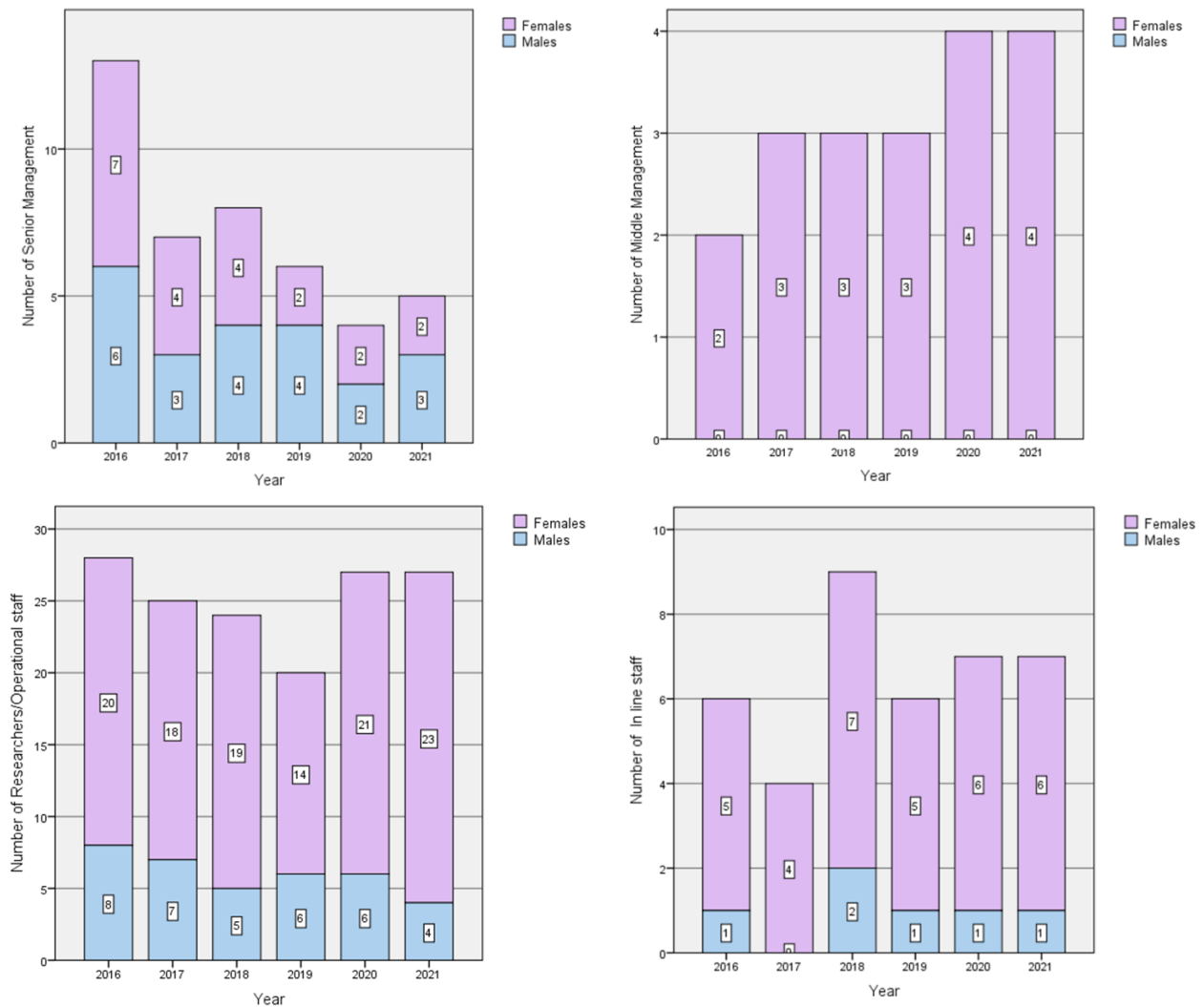


Figure 2. Distribution of CVBF's staff by gender, role, and year (2016-2021)



The CVBF's staff has been studied for the **gender contract's type over time (2016-2021)**. For this purpose, the CVBF's staff has been clustered into 4 groups: subordinate employees, consultants, collaborators, and trainees (Figure 3).

First of all, most of the CVBF's staff has a subordinate contract. The number of female subordinate employees steadily increased from 20 in 2016 to 24 in 2021, while the number of males employed with the same type of contract remained almost the same with a slight increase in employees from 1 in 2016 to 2 in 2021. Regarding the consultants, the number of males slightly declined from 10 in 2016 to 6 in 2021 with small fluctuations during the 6-years interval (*Figure 3*). The number of female employees has been relatively low, in particular the number of women decreased as well from 5 in 2016 to 0 in 2019 to slightly increasing to 1 employee in 2020 and 2021. Men continued to structure most of the CVBF consultants, however, while in 2016 there were 5 females every 10 males, by 2021 this ratio had narrowed to 1 female for every 6 males.

Unlike consultants, most of the people employed over time as collaborators are women, except for 2019 (*Figure 3*). In 2016 number of males and females was similar (3 and 4, respectively), though in 2017 there was a drop to zero in the male collaborators and this position was totally taken by females (3). In 2018, 1 man was employed, then in 2019 we had 2 male employees, determining 2 males versus 1 female in 2019. The number of males then decreased through the following 2 years with no male employee in 2021. In relation to females during the 6 years period, except for 2019, there were tiny fluctuations in their number, reaching 5 employees in 2021 and continuing to make-up most of the employees within this type of contract. Finally, also the majority of trainees were females in this considered period (2016-2021). As reported in *Figure 3*, the number of male candidates was relatively low, attesting an average of 1 employee per year and none in 2018 and 2021. As



reported in this document, the number of females was higher compared to the value recorded for males and it remained relatively steady with small fluctuations over time (5 women employed as trainees both in 2016 and 2021).

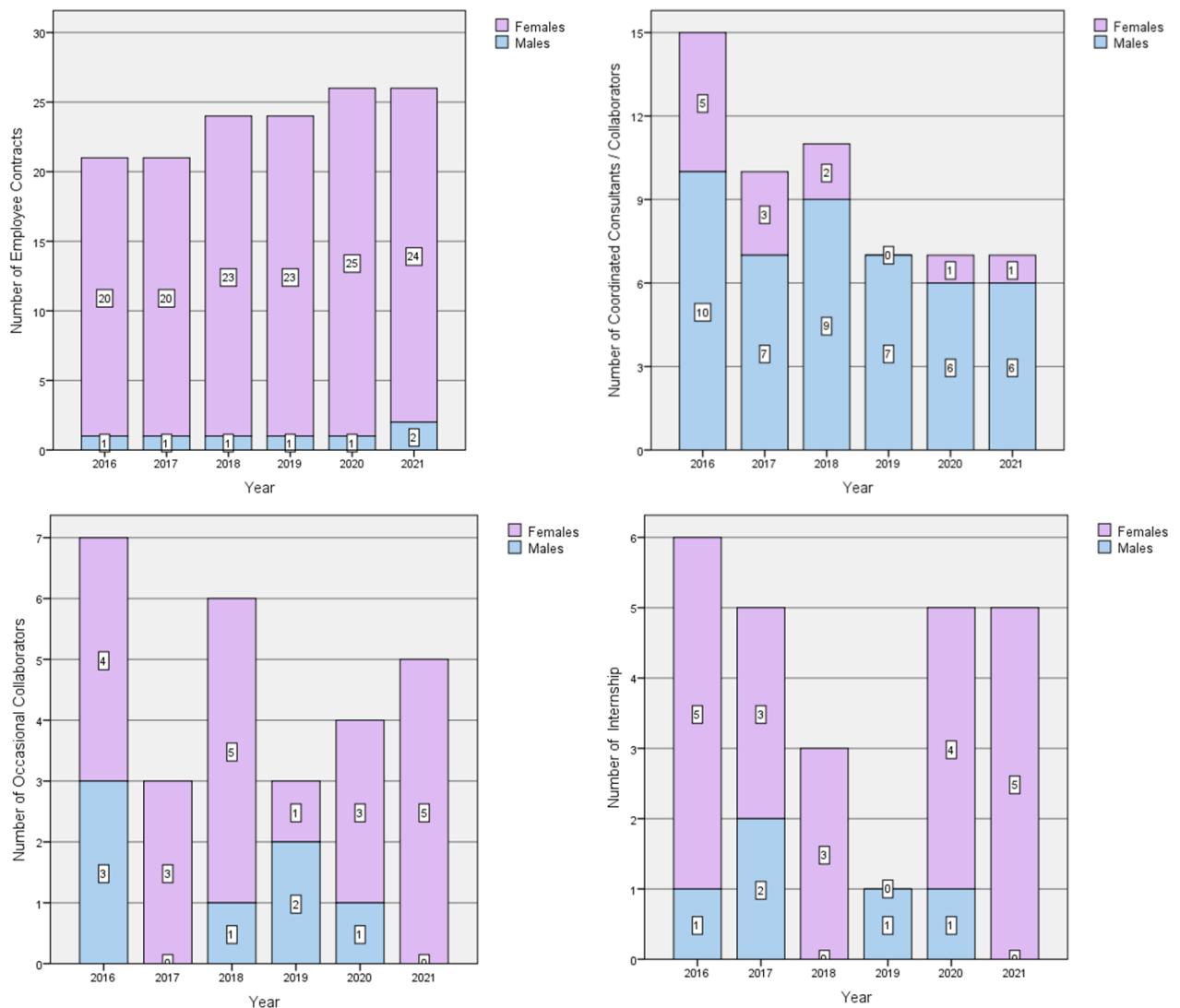


Figure 3. Distribution of CVBF's staff by gender, contract, and year (2016-2021)

Considering the high number of female employees in CVBF, it was decided to analyse the **distribution of job applications by gender over the years 2017-2021**, to



understand if the same trend is already traceable before employment. *Figure 4* clearly depicts that many job applicants are females in the considered period. Starting at 25 in 2017, females' applications declined to 10 in 2018, rising up to 21 in 2021, although remaining somewhat lower than in 2017. On the other hand, the number of male candidates contracted from 8 in 2017 to 2 the following year, 2018, and rose again to 4 in 2019 as well as 2020. However, in 2021 the number of females (21) was significantly higher than the number of males (2).

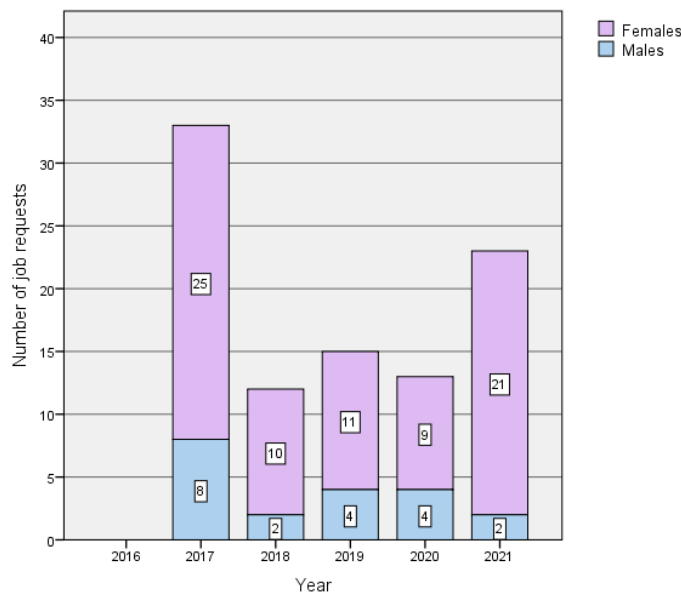


Figure 4. Distribution of job applications by gender and year (2017-2021)

In addition to the numerical composition of the staff, the variable relating to the **gross monthly salary** has also been analysed. Indeed, the gender pay gap investigate another type of inequality women faces in the access to work, progression, and rewards. For the purpose of this analysis, it has been decided to highlight the annual average gross salary by gender and year, excluding outliers from the analysis (*Table 1*). In general, the annual average gross salary of women linearly increased over time, except in 2020, whereas the men's one had a more



stochastic trend. Except for the first year considered, the annual average gross salary for male employees was higher compared to the female one, becoming almost doubling in 2019 and 2020 (40.316,50 and 40.334,00 euro versus 21.808,00 and 19.259,08 euro). In 2021, the annual average gross salary of both women and men was similar (22.137,25 and 25.950,40, respectively).

Gender		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Females	Mean	16.792,84	17.474,65	21.412,45	21.808,00	19.259,08	22.137,25
	N	25	20	22	21	25	24
	SD	9.106,584	10.194,080	8.062,551	9.122,602	8.235,700	11.096,303
Males	Mean	16.196,70	32.494,00	23.019,50	40.316,50	40.334,00	25.950,40
	N	10	5	6	4	4	5
	SD	10.599,686	23.663,970	26.532,942	41.141,027	41.312,947	26.864,712
Total	Mean	16.622,51	20.478,52	21.756,82	24.769,36	22.165,96	22.794,68
	N	35	25	28	25	29	29
	SD	9.399,680	14.601,261	13.467,738	18.135,148	17.196,013	14.366,329

*N: number; SD: Standard Deviation

Table 1. Annual salary (euro) by gender and year (2016-2021)

In conclusion, the analysis of numerical data has shown that:

- Women make up the majority of CVBF employees, except for the senior management roles and those with a consultant contract
- Men usually have a higher annual gross salary compared to women
- The higher number of females compare to males CVBF employees depends also on the higher number of job applications submitted by women compared to men.



4. PLANNING PHASE

The CVBF's GEP respects the 5 major area as indicated by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, and *Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans 2021* (<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/876509>). In particular, in the CVBF's GEP each specific area is organised in distinct objectives and a set of expected results have been identified to ensure the achievement of final goals, such as reach a real gender balance. Associated to each expected result, actions to be carried out over the next 3 years have been identified. At the same time, the related achievement indicators useful for the monitoring process have been highlighted as following:

- A. Work-life balance and organisational culture
- B. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
- C. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
- D. Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content
- E. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

A. Work-life balance and organisational culture

- a) Establishing a permanent working group for gender equality (GEP Team) (1st year)

Rational: It is important to assign dedicated resources to ensure the gender equality principles and allow their effective implementation in the organisational culture.

Goal: Increase the general awareness of gender equality principles in the organisation.

Action: Establish a permanent working group for gender equality to implement actions reported in the GEP and monitor their impacts.

Indicator: Nr. of actions reported in the GEP Action plan timely implemented.



b) Incorporating gender-related issues into internal procedures and regulations (Each year)

Rational: Internal procedures are operational documents that describe the CVBF modus operandi according to the different roles. Clearly, well-written and up-to-date procedures support transparency and accountability.

Goal: Provide an institutional recognition of the non-discrimination principle.

Action: During the first year of the CVBF's GEP application, a detailed analysis of internal procedures will be carried out to identify the procedures that will need to be modified. If different procedures will need to be modified, each year a priority list will be developed. If no procedure needs to be modified, the incorporation of gender equality principles in the new procedures will be monitored.

Indicator: Nr. of relevant procedures modified OR nr. of new procedures written to be included in the CVBF's GEP issues.

c) Providing the CVBF GEP document to the newly recruited staff as part of the starting pack

Rational: It is crucial that all newly recruited staff members are aware of the CVBF GEP principles as the organisational core inclusiveness structure.

Goal: Establish a general awareness of gender equality and anti-discrimination principles among the organisation staff *since the beginning*.

Action: Provide a copy of the CVBF GEP to the new assets.

Indicator: 100% of staff members who are provided with a copy of the CVBF's GEP.

d) Organising the annual gender equality day (each year)

Rational: It is essential that all staff members are aware of how the gender equality principles are embedded in the CVBF organisational culture.



Goal: Increase the awareness of gender equality principles among staff members and share the main results obtained from the yearly analysis performed by the CVBF's GEP team.

Action: Organize annual webinars on gender equality issues and develop yearly updated CVBF's GEP reports based on the collected data.

Indicator: Nr. of staff members who participate to the annual gender equality day and join the webinar.

B. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

a) Organizing empowerment training sessions (1st year)

Rational: It is important to make aware all the CVBF staff members of their potential skills and that the organisation supports their professional and personal development.

Goal: Improve the leadership and decision-making skills among staff members to support their career development.

Action: Organise tailored empowerment training sessions with external experts dedicated to leadership and decision-making skills.

Indicator: Nr. of staff members who participate in the training sessions/nr. of positive feedback provided by staff members.

C. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

a) Establishing unbiased and transparent progression and development paths (1st year)

Rational: Establish clear, unbiased, and transparent criteria to support a career development (based on the different roles) by engaging with each employee.

Goal: Constantly, adopt and promote non-discrimination principles.



Action: Approve an internal procedure aimed to establish clear criteria, specific objectives, transparent evaluation processes, and rewards for outstanding career achievements.

Indicator: Correct and regular implementation of the procedures by CVBF management.

b) Ensuring gender equality in the recruitment of women and men employees (2nd year)

Rational: State clear, unbiased, and transparent criteria to be used during the recruitment process (based on the different roles) to improve the probability of finding the right candidate among males and females.

Goal: Adopt inclusive recruitment principles.

Action: Approve an internal procedure to establish clear criteria and steps on the recruitment process and include them in the job description.

Indicator: Nr. of job descriptions, which include the defined recruitment criteria.

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

a) Increasing the gender balance of speakers / research partners into research and teaching content (2nd year)

Rational: Integrate the gender dimension in the events, initiatives, and research projects carried out by CVBF as a concrete action toward a real equality in research.

Goal: Increase the awareness of CVBF's GEP principles among invited speakers and research partners.

Action: Introduce gender balance criteria recommendations during the selection of speakers/research partners applying the same successful strategy used for research and teaching contents.



Indicator: Nr. of events / research projects in which the gender balance criteria have been adopted.

E. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

a) Setting up of the anti-violence desk (3rd year)

Rational: Select a person responsible for the anti-violence desk that will collect complaints on violence and mobbing episodes. The presence of this desk may discourage such behaviours to happen, at the same time, the victim will feel supported to report the incident.

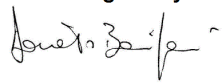
Goal: Condemn and avoid any gender-based violence, including sexual harassment among the CVBF staff members.

Action: Set activities and responsibilities for the selected responsible person in order to provide fast and effective support to the victims; develop practical procedures to facilitate the access to this support office.

Indicator: Nr. of staff members who access to the anti-violence desk.

Consorzio per Valutazioni Biologiche e Farmacologiche

Chief Executive Officer

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01/03/2022