

Gender Equality Plan 2023

TWINCORE – Centre for Experimental and Clinical Infection Research

Introduction

As a cutting-edge research organisation, TWINCORE permanently strives for excellence. In order to secure the sustainable development of the centre, it continuously tries to recruit the best international experts in the field of infection biology. A crucial component in this endeavour is to establish a diverse organisational culture, eliminate possible biases and create equal opportunities on every career level and in each area of the institution.

As gender equality is a central pillar of this strategy, TWINCORE is committed to assess, discuss and improve its current state with respect to this on a regular basis. Based on the gender-disaggregated data presented below, measures to promote gender equality will be identified and put into action. The data will be updated annually. If the need for additional measures becomes evident, those will be updated as well.

Structure of TWINCORE

TWINCORE is a subsidiary of two partners: the Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research (HZI) and the Hannover Medical School (MHH). It is important to realise that TWINCORE does not employ its own staff, but operates based on employees from these two partners, who work together in a joint research space in the TWINCORE building. As the staff is part of either HZI or MHH, many important functions of a gender equality strategy are not covered by TWINCORE itself, but are in the direct responsibility of the partners (e.g. equal opportunities officers). Therefore, **general measures** that employees of the respective partners can benefit from are detailed in the gender equality plans of the partners, which can be found [here](#) (HZI) and [here](#) (MHH). It is crucial to note that these measures comprehensively apply to staff working at TWINCORE as well.

However, as TWINCORE has a local management at its site in Hannover, there is a strong commitment for additionally promoting gender equality through certain **site-specific measures**. Therefore, a small set of dedicated data has been collected specifically for TWINCORE. This data and measures derived from it will be the subject of the following sections.

Resources

As TWINCORE does not have employees of its own, most resources are provided through the respective partners. For example, both partners employ an equal opportunities officer, who is responsible for TWINCORE members as well. In addition, the respective staff councils as well as family and welcome offices, career development units and complaints offices are available and responsible also for staff working at the TWINCORE site.

The responsibility for site-specific measures with respect to gender equality is with the TWINCORE **head of administration**. Two further team members of the administration support the data collection and monitoring, as well as the implementation of gender equality measures. Public relations activities are implemented by the communications coordinator.

Data Collection and Analysis

The following basic data have been collected for all TWINCORE staff as of **December 1, 2022**. In contrast to the report from 2021, associated groups in the building who are not part of the TWINCORE faculty, have been excluded from the statistics.

	Number	Female	Male	Female (%)	Male (%)
Total number of people	154	100	54	64.9	35.1
Directly in science	129	86	43	66.7	33.3

Administration/infrastructure	25	14	11	56.0	44.0
PhD/MD candidates	59	40	19	67.8	32.2
Postdocs	23	16	7	69.6	30.4
Group leaders	10	2	8	20.0	80.0
Fixed-term employees	121	79	42	65.3	34.7
Permanent employees	33	21	12	63.6	36.4

The table shows that the overall ratio of female to male persons working at TWINCORE is approximately 65/35. Almost exactly the same gender ratio is found for people working directly in science.

A slight overrepresentation of women on the PhD/MD candidate level (68 %) continues on to the postdoc level (70 %). Due to the relatively small numbers, significant fluctuation is expected to occur, and indeed is observed to happen, in comparison to the numbers from 2021 (PhD/MD: 65 %; Postdocs: 50 %).

Finally, of the 10 scientific group leaders at TWINCORE, only 2 (20 %) are female. This discrepancy indicates that particular attention should be paid to career development measures on the path from postdoc to PI level.

The female/male ratio among the fixed-term employees corresponds almost exactly with the overall ratio of women to men, so that no particular bias is evident. Among the permanent employees, two thirds are female. However, as the total number of permanent employees is relatively low, no clear trend can be deduced from this ratio.

Due to the personnel model of TWINCORE, data on pay grades and full-time/part-time employment cannot be reliably compiled at this stage. If these data become comprehensively available to TWINCORE in the future, corresponding analyses will be added.

Measures

Organisational Culture and General Measures

TWINCORE recognises **gender mainstreaming** as a central element in order to create a sustainable culture of gender equality and eliminate possible biases. Gender-based aspects are considered in all administrative and strategic processes and regularly are the subject of discussion in both internal and external committees. As a signatory of the **Diversity Charter**, TWINCORE has self-committed to promote the recognition, appreciation and integration of diversity in business culture. While the charter addresses all dimensions of diversity, gender and gender identity are a central pillar of TWINCORE's efforts to implement the commitments of the charter. Appreciating and fostering diversity is also a cornerstone of TWINCORE's **Corporate Culture Statement**, which has been developed by central management and faculty and will be published in 2023.

Within the framework set by the employers of the staff working at TWINCORE, **flexible working hours** are promoted wherever possible in order to support the reconciliation of job and family. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, **home office/mobile work** was heavily used to support staff with challenging familial or other personal situations. Since the "new normal" was implemented in summer 2020, both tools were put to even greater use. TWINCORE's "Mobile Work Guidelines" now explicitly mention extraordinary family situations as a possible application of mobile work.

In order to create a safe space at work, **guidelines against sexual harassment** have been drafted by a joint workgroup between HZI and TWINCORE and been put into action by the executive management. The guidelines define measures of prevention and detail first points of contact as well as a process and sanctions for possible cases. At TWINCORE, there is a **central contact person** who offers confidential initial counselling and is approachable for both HZI and MHH employees.

Gender Equality in Leadership and Recruitments

The ratio of female to male group leaders clearly shows that additional effort is required to foster gender equality in leadership positions. First and foremost, this necessitates dedicated **training** on the topic of unconscious bias.

It is planned to offer an interactive info session on the topic for everyone working at TWINCORE in collaboration with an external agency. In addition, a dedicated workshop will be offered for all leaders.

Additional measures include the **active recruitment** of excellent female scientists for leadership positions, which is a regular topic in the internal strategy meeting. Besides the active search for female candidates in case of open positions, specialised funding options for the recruitment of female group leaders (e.g. from the Helmholtz Association) are considered. Furthermore, **dual-career options** are applied as a supporting tool to offer more attractive packages to possible recruits.

Finally, the workgroup **“Young Leaders in Science”**, which focuses on the career development of female scientists towards leadership positions has been initiated by the HZI and its outposts, including TWINCORE. The group has identified obstacles preventing excellent female candidates from assuming leadership positions, and proposed additional counteracting measures. The TWINCORE site has actively participated in this group with two representatives from its research groups. The suggestions of the group are currently being reviewed by the HZI management.

Additional Measures

As mentioned in the introduction, TWINCORE is embedded in the strategic and organisational environment of HZI and MHH and benefits from their gender equality plans and the measures detailed within. Thus, the site-specific measures and commitments are only a reinforcement of the plethora of additional measures that are available through the employers of staff working at TWINCORE, such as career development initiatives, specialised performance-based funding models, childcare services, counselling/mentoring offers and many more. Again, the reader is referred to the corresponding gender equality plans of HZI and MHH, where many more details can be found. TWINCORE will continue to promote gender equality, both by making comprehensive use of the partners' offers and by the further development of its own site-specific measures.

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