

Gender Equality Plan 2024

TWINCORE – Centre for Experimental and Clinical Infection Research

Introduction

As a cutting-edge research organisation, TWINCORE permanently strives for excellence regarding the research results as well as the working conditions. In order to secure its sustainable development, TWINCORE continuously aims for the recruitment of the best international experts in the field of infection biology and other relevant disciplines. A crucial component in this endeavour is to establish a diverse organisational culture, to eliminate possible biases and to create equal opportunities on every career level and in each area of the institution.

As gender equality is a central element in this strategy, TWINCORE is committed to assess, discuss and improve its gender equality status 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, they will be discussed and 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). TWINCORE does not employ its own staff, but operates based on employees from the 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 corresponding 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). 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 by implementation of 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 two partner institutions. For example, both partners employ an equal opportunities officer, who is also responsible for TWINCORE members. 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 TWINCORE.

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. Since 2023, the Sustainability Working Group of TWINCORE has also been addressing social sustainability aspects and submitting suggestions correspondingly. Public relations activities are implemented by the communication coordinator.

Data Collection and Analysis

The following basic data have been collected for all TWINCORE staff as of **December 1, 2024**.

Table 1: Distribution of females and males in different groups of employees

	Number	Female	Male	Female (%)	Male (%)
Total number of people	140	87	53	62.1	37.9
Directly in science	111	71	40	64.0	36.0

Administration/infrastructure	21	9	12	42.9	57.1
PhD/MD candidates	39	29	10	74.4	25.6
Postdocs	21	10	11	47.6	52.4
Group leaders	11	3	8	27.3	72.7
Fixed-term employees	105	63	42	60.0	40.0
Permanent employees	35	24	11	68.6	31.4

In Table 1, the genders are subdivided into male and female, as no other gender assignation have been reported to date.

The table shows that the overall ratio of female to male employees at TWINCORE is approximately 62/38. The gender ratio is almost similar for people working directly in science. In administration, the gender distribution is 43/57. The overrepresentation of women in PhD/MD candidates has increased from 65% to 74% compared to the last year's report. In contrast, the gender distribution of postdocs has almost evened out at 48/52 (previous year 70/30). In contrast, the gender distribution of group leaders is 27/72. The divergent female to male ratios amongst postdocs and PIs indicates that particular attention should be paid to career development measures on the path from postdoc to PI. The ratio of women to men among fixed-term employees is almost exactly the same as the overall ratio of women to men, so in this regard no particular bias seem to be evident. Of the permanent employees, over two thirds are female. However, as the total number of permanent employees is relatively low, no clear trend can be derived 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 as a strategy to eliminate possible gender 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 is 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 has been published in 2023.

Within the framework set by the employers of the staff working at TWINCORE, **flexible working hours** can be taken when needed in order to facilitate the reconciliation of job and family. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, **home office/mobile work** was offered to support staff with challenging familial or other personal situations. With the implementation of the "new normal" in summer 2020, flexible working hours and home office/mobile work were used extensively to avoid unnecessary contacts thus reducing the risk of potential spread of infection at the working place. TWINCORE's "Mobile Work Guidelines" now explicitly mention extraordinary family situations as an indication to apply mobile work.

To meet the acute requirements and enable further flexibility for working parents, TWINCORE provides a fully equipped parent-child office. This room can also be used by pregnant and breastfeeding persons as a quiet room or rest area. In addition, one person is actively involved in the "Familie und Beruf" audit from HZI to increase the visibility of working parents and to implement possible measures at TWINCORE.

The sustainability working group at TWINCORE also focuses on social sustainability, always taking gender equality into account.

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 potential 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 scientific leadership positions. To avoid “unconscious bias” in future recruitments, 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.

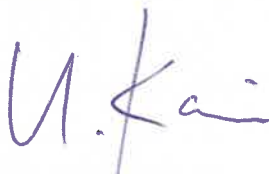
Additional measures include the **active recruitment** of excellent female scientists for leadership positions, which is a regular topic in the internal strategy meeting. Besides the active search for female candidates in case of open positions, specialised funding options for the recruitment of female group leaders (e.g. from the Helmholtz Association) are considered. Furthermore, **dual-career options** were arranged in few cases where such arrangement could be implemented 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 have been partially implemented.

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 these institutions. 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.

Hannover,



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