Gender Equality Plan

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Document History

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1.1	A Min Tjoa, Edgar Weippl, Markus Klemen, et al.	29.08.2022	
2.0	A Min Tjoa, Edgar Weippl, Markus Klemen, Jeanine Lefèvre et al.	10.03.2023	New template, new structure, updated content
3.0	A Min Tjoa, Edgar Weippl, Markus Klemen, Jeanine Lefèvre et al.	10.11.2023	Content update (according to COMET report, reporting period 2022-23 and new plans for the future)
4.0	A Min Tjoa, Edgar Weippl, Markus Klemen, Jeanine Lefèvre et al.	29.05.2024	Content update (according to COMET report, reporting period 2023-24 and new plans for the future)
5.0	A Min Tjoa, Edgar Weippl, Markus Klemen, Jeanine Lefèvre et al.	25.07.2025	Content update (according to COMET report, reporting period 2024-25 and preliminary results of the Fem4CyberSec project), adaption of the structure to better reflect the importance of the GEP as a living document and management tool

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0 Management review

Diverse perspectives are valuable in any field, but this is especially true for information security: as digitalization progresses and new technologies emerge, novel challenges, threats and risks arise. A diverse, balanced workforce provides multifaceted points of view and is, thus, better equipped to handle an ever-increasing variety of challenges in the ICT domain.

Following this premise, SBA Research aims at

- increasing the share of women (research, leading positions) and further establish SBA as a career steppingstone for women,
- reducing gender gaps in information security research, in employment as well as in R&D, opening up potential new fields of research in the process, and
- consolidating positive employer branding and attracting new potentials as a socially responsible, gender-competent organization with an inclusive work and management culture.

To achieve these goals, we are running a project called "Fem4CyberSec"[1] and

- implemented a cross-cutting gender mainstreaming process with a revised Horizon-adequate GEP as management and monitoring tool, and
- increased gender competence on all levels of our workforce as well as in our research and communication by addressing gender biases.

Next, our focus will lie on

- mapping career paths at SBA Research and drawing up a concept for career development measures for women,
- reinforcing our inclusive company culture by providing guidelines for dealing with discrimination and sexualized violence, and
- adapting and revising our gender mainstreaming process according to the findings of our monitoring.

Markus Klemen, CEO SBA Research, July 2025, Vienna

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[1] Project funded by FFG, funding scheme: FemTech Karriere, duration: 01/07/2024 to 31/05/2026.

1 Introduction

Diversity in thought, action, and the way challenges are viewed is a great advantage – especially in a fast-moving world such as information security. Studies have shown that teams consisting of diverse people are more likely to have a holistic view of problems, approach problems differently and have a broad spectrum of social competencies which positively influence team stability[2]. A company culture that lives diversity and opposes discrimination ultimately benefits from high employee satisfaction.

Unfortunately, ICT is still a male-dominated field; there are few women working in the IT sector in general (18% in Austria)[3], and in the cybersecurity sector in particular (e.g., 13% in Germany)[4]. Figures from academia show a similar picture, stating a share of 19.6% of female doctoral graduates in Information and Communication Technologies in Austria (16.2% in Germany, 22.8% EU-27 average).[5] To change this, SBA is proactively and continually committed to Gender Equality and Diversity. In 2018, we drafted a strategy paper to address the shortage of women in leading positions which provided successful measures that are still in effect today (e.g., regarding work-life-balance, promotion of young female talent, equality in leadership and decision making). In this context, we are particularly proud of our activities aiming at increasing the visibility of women in ICT in order to break with old prejudices, provide role models and get more (young) women interested in information security. We updated this strategy paper on a regular basis and revised it into the first version of this Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in 2022.

In addition, we successfully applied for FFG funding for our project Fem4CyberSec which aims to further intensify and professionalize our activities for gender mainstreaming. For instance, we established company-wide measures to facilitate systemic institutional change as well as support their active monitoring and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement.

In preparation for this project, a Community of Practice (CoP) for Gender and Equality was established in 2024 and the then-current situation analysed. While network initiatives, work-life balance and parental leave (both maternal and paternal) are considered well implemented, areas such as gender competence and awareness, equal and inclusive career paths, and data analysis were identified as requiring further improvement.

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[2] Nicole Voigt, Marcus van der Vegte, Isabell M. Welpe: Tackling the Green Gap: BCG Gender Diversity Index. Deutschland 2021. Warum Vielfalt nachhaltig ist. 2021. Online: https://web-assets.bcg.com/d0/d4/123d583a4c2cac30d7637925de4d/bcg-gender-diversity-index-deutschland-2021.pdf [last accessed 25.07.2025]

[3] Futurezone: 6 Tipps für Frauen, die in die IT einsteigen möchten. Online: https://futurezone.at/b2b/it-computer-informatik-data-science-womeninict-frauen-frauentag-jobs/402353784 [last accessed 25.07.2025]

[4] (ISC)²: Cybersecurity Workforce Study. A critical need for cybersecurity professional persists amids a year of cultural and workplace evolution, 2022, p.38-41). Online: https://media.isc2.org/-/media/Project/ISC2/Main/Media/documents/research/ISC2-Cybersecurity-Workforce-Study-2022.pdf?rev=1bb9812a77c74e7c9042c3939678c196 [last accessed 25.07.2025])

[5] European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, She figures 2021 – Gender in research and innovation – Statistics and indicators, Publications Office, 2021, p. 36, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/06090 [last accessed 25.07.2025]

2 Process requirements

2.1 Public Document

In accordance with the Horizon Europe requirements, our Gender Equality Plan is publicly available on the Equal Opportunities Site[6] on our webpage as well as on our internal Equal Opportunities Site on Teams. This version is now the fifth update in line with data based on the COMET[7] reporting. The management's commitment is shown through their signature on this document. All updates are presented at our SummitUP, a biweekly virtual meeting format open to all employees of SBA as well as associated researchers. Topics, measurements and processes behind the Gender Equality Plan are furthermore presented at events like company-wide strategy seminar (most recently in December 2024).

2.2 Dedicated resources

We founded the Gender and Equality Community of Practice (CoP) in 2024, with employees from nearly all departments and levels participating (around seven people in total at present). The CoP meets every two to three months to discuss recent developments and issues regarding gender, diversity, and equality.

The Fem4CyberSec project (01/07/2024 to 31/05/2026) enables SBA Research to comprehensively address gender and equality issues and maintain the GEP as a living document and management tool. This included the support of an external expert – Nicole Schaffer – who accompanied the process through awareness-raising workshops and consulting activities, for example regarding the installation of an Office of Equal Opportunities.

As of May 1st, 2025, the Office for Equal Opportunities (EquO) has been established to support management and staff in all gender- and equality-related topics at SBA Research. EquO works in strong collaboration with the works council and HR. One of the main tasks is the annual update of and reporting for the Gender Equality Plan, which includes:

- Reports to management, the works council and employees on the relevant figures and indicators for the development of equality at SBA
- Annual evaluation of the operational situation with regard to gender equality in cooperation with the works council and management

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[6] https://www.sba-research.org/equal-opportunities/ [last accessed 25.07.2025]
[7] SBA Research (SBA-K1 NGC) is a COMET Center within the COMET – Competence Centers for Excellent Technologies Programme and funded by BMIMI, BMWET, and the federal state of Vienna. The COMET Programme is managed by FFG. The COMET reporting period spans twelve months over two calendar years, always beginning in April and ending in March. In this document, the term 'this reporting period' refers therefore to the period from April 2024 to March 2025.

- Recommendation of measures and budget plans for management on gender equality in the company
- Coordination of the implementation of measures to reduce discrimination and promote equality between all genders

Highlights 2024/25

- ✓ Trainings (see below)
- ✓ Installment of an Office of Equal Opportunities (May 2025)
- ✓ Regular Meetings of Community of Practice Gender and Equality

2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

SBA already collects gender data on personnel on a regular basis for the yearly COMET reports which have to be submitted to the Austrian Research Promotion Agency FFG.

Based on personnel statistics (for SBA Research and the ICT sector in general), a SWOT-analysis and qualitative interviews, an equality monitoring system was installed at SBA. Via specific indicators, we report annually resp. in some categories biannually on our progress and evaluate, adapt and further develop measures accordingly.
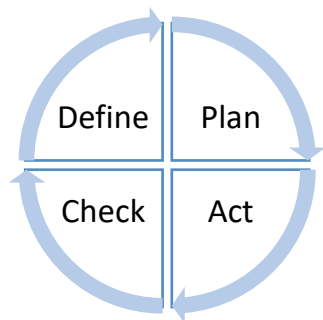
Figure 1: Gender Mainstreaming Process

This process is systematically monitored using the Gender Equality Plan as a management tool which records all work packages. From version 5.0 onwards, the GEP contains an analysis of the current situation, tasks, and indicators resp. milestones.

This fact- and evidence-based, company-wide process will ensure equal opportunities at SBA Research and make these goals measurable and adaptable; thus, it enables SBA to promote women not only at the research center but in the IT sector in general.

We decided to focus on the following parameters for our monitoring:

Personnel (head count, FTEs and respective female share)

- Key Researchers
- Senior Researchers
- Junior Researchers
- Trainees
- Project Leads NON-K-Projects (public funding)
- Management
- Scientific Board
- Works Council

Work-Life-Balance (female and male share)

- Part-time employment
- Part-time leadership
- Parental Leave
- Educational Leave

Networking/Outreach (number)

- Events
- Networks

Training/Capacity (number)

- Workshops
- Guidelines
- Events

Some of these data are based on our COMET reporting; another important source is the governmental Gender Equality Survey for non-university research (AUFO)[8]. The starting point for the two sources differs: (1) a specific cut-off date is used for the AUFO, whereas the COMET data always refer to a full reporting period, and (2) different calculation bases. Therefore, we monitor the following parameters in accordance with the AUFO cycle (i.e., every two years):

Research (female share)

- Active publishing
- Publications

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[8]   https://www.bmimi.gv.at/themen/innovation/publikationen/menschen_qualifikation_gender/Gleichstellungserhebung-2024.html
[last accessed 25.07.2025]

Milestones completed 2024/25

- ✓ Preliminary analysis (July 2024)
- ✓ Sectoral Analysis (October 2024)
- ✓ Workshops (see below)
- ✓ Qualitative Interviews (October 2024)
- ✓ Definition of Indicators (May 2025)

Milestones planned 2025/26

- First evalution based on the new monitoring process
- Adaption of measurements and process if necessary

2.4 Training

To strengthen gender competence within the company, we provide our employees with the necessary training. During this reporting period, our focus was on developing and expanding the gender competence of managers and key personnel. Furthermore, we examined gender categories in organizational and leadership culture and considered career development measures for female scientists. In addition, staff members and (future) project managers were trained in their gender competence as researchers by developing internal guidelines for sex- and gender-analysis in information security (equality in teams, gender relevance of research content, gendered innovations[9]) in a participatory. The results of these workshops were communicated to all employees to raise general awareness of gender and diversity issues.

Title of In-House-Training	Date	Participants	Content
Gender Equality Expertise for Management & Key Persons: Kick-off, Awareness & Assessment/Gender Analysis	04/07/2024	Management, Works Council, HR, CoP	In this workshop, we reflected on equal opportunities, equality measures and roles at the company and identified key areas for further development.
Capacity Building: Gender in organizational and leadership culture; career advancement for female scientists	27/11/2024	HR, management, CoP	In this workshop, we reflected on organizational and leadership culture, measures to promote women, coaching and mentoring and analyzed the current situation at SBA and identified further needs, especially for career

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[9] Gendered Innovations | Stanford University [last accessed 25.07.2025]

			development and advancement of female researchers.
Fem4CyberSec: Progress and Review	14/12/2024	All employees	In this presentation, we summarized the results of the Fem4CyberSec project to date. For example, we presented the sectoral analysis and the role of the Office of Equal Opportunities. We also outlined the next steps.
How-to: Accessibility	13/02/2025	Team and project leads, interested parties	In this workshop, the guideline for creating accessible Word files and converting them into accessible PDF documents was discussed, as well as how to deal with the subject in LaTex.
Capacity building: Gender in information security research	25/02/2025	Team and project leads, interested parties	In this workshop, we reflected on gender-biased R&D, sex- and gender-analyses and intersectional approaches in information security research. Based on this, we worked on a guideline "Gender in Information Security Research".
Diversity in CTI[10]	20/05/2025	Project ASOC	Presentation by Nicole Schaffer
Fem4CyberSec: Milestones, Next Steps & Lessons Learned	24/06/2025	Management, Works Council	Introduction of the Gender Equality Plan as a living document

Table 1: In-House-Trainings 2024/2025

External Training	Date	Participants	Content
Entwicklung von Gleichstellungsplänen an Österreichs Hochschul- und Forschungseinrichtungen	27/09/2023 24/01/2024 22/05/2024	Head of EquO, HR	The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology organized three online training courses on the (further) development of equality plans. The training courses are based on the guidelines for developing equality plans published by the BMBWF and BMK and on respective documents published by the European Commission.
Re:think Diversity	23/10/2024	Head of EquO, HR	Re:think Diversity is the leading specialist congress for diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in the DACH region. The aim of the congress is to redefine diversity and present in-depth approaches for more openness and appreciation in the corporate context.

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[10] CTI stands for cyber threat intelligence.

Exzellente Forschung braucht den richtigen Rahmen	15/05/2025	Head of EquO	Framework conditions for a non-discriminatory research environment were discussed, the topics included discrimination, sexualized discrimination, sexualised harassment and exclusion.

Table 2: External Trainings 2024/2025

Planned for 2025/26

- Re:think Diversity 2025
- follow-up of Exzellente Forschung
- Presentation at Strategy Day
- Follow-Up Gender in Research

3 Aspects of Gender Equality Plan

3.1 HR, recruitment and career progression

As a research center that takes its social responsibility seriously, our long-term goal is to increase the proportion of women in scientific and technical roles at all levels. Furthermore, we aim to improve employee retention and provide all employees with opportunities for career development and work-life balance. To this end, we analysed the current situation in terms of personnel statistics, did a SWOT-analysis, and conducted qualitative interviews. Based on our findings, we are mapping career paths at SBA Research, try to identify possible "leaks" and are working on promotion measures (for more information see Career Progression).

In this reporting period, the share of female scientists (FTE) at SBA has unfortunately dropped to 24%, which is below our target value of 27% while still exceeding the 15.8% quota of female graduates in Computer Science at TU Wien[11]. Our female share of scientists is and always will be subject to fluctuation due to several reasons: (1) we encourage the careers of our female scientists, including helping them to get prestigious positions at universities (see Promotion of female talent and SBA as a stepping stone); (2) a notable share of female researchers were/are on maternity leave. Furthermore, our usually strong participation in the FFG FEMtech internship program experienced a decline due to a tighter subject focus in the FEMtech program and the generally tense economic situation after COVID-19. Therefore, the share of female scientists was slightly lower in the past two years; however, over the entire second period of our COMET funding (04/2021 – 03/2025) the average of 28.6%.
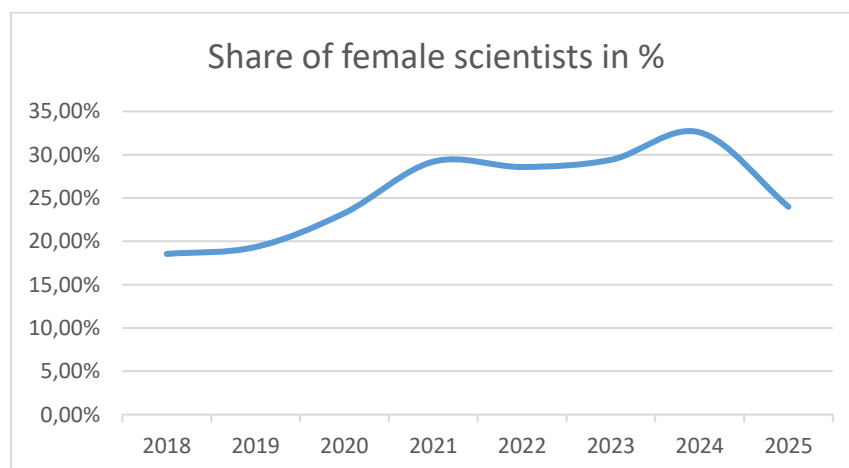
Figure 2: Share of female scientists during our SBA-K1 COMET project (March 2018 to March 2025)

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[11] TUW in Zahlen, 2025: https://www.tuwien.at/tu-wien/ueber-die-tuw/zahlen-und-fakten [last accessed 25.07.2025]

Milestones completed in 2024/25

> ✓ Analysis of the current situation completed (July 2024)
> ✓ Sectoral analysis completed (October 2024)
> ✓ Qualitative analysis completed (October 2024)

Long-term goal

> • Increase of the female share of scientist, especially for senior scientists

3.1.1 Recruitment

Job advertisements are drafted gender- and diversity-sensitive to reach all relevant target groups for SBA Research. Job offers include job descriptions, areas of responsibilities, career development aspects, and measures for work-life-integration (flexible- and part-time, remote work) to reflect current standards and signal SBA's status as a family-friendly employer. We furthermore exercise due care regarding the wording in job advertisements: for instance, power and status-related terms such as "ambition" and "assertiveness" have been shown to discourage women from applying to the respective position; instead, we are focusing on the description of tasks and promoting our measures for work life balance integration to appeal to female applicants. Job offers are also communicated via FFG's FEMtech database to directly reach qualified women.

At SBA, we also place great importance on hiring interns as a recruitment strategy. One of the entry points for this is our own courses at TU Wien and the University of Vienna. We offer a variety of internships, e.g., FEMTech, IAESTE and professional internships. These internship programs are intended and have served as steppingstones into long-term careers at SBA. Seven former interns (not counting FemTech interns) are currently employed in research and professional services, highlighting SBA's role as a career launchpad and its commitment to early talent development. For women, SBA creates targeted opportunities especially through FEMTech internships, thereby contributing to a more even balance between men and women in STEM professions.

We will further focus on recruiting excellent female scientists, intensify the visibility of our female researchers and employees, and expand the measures to keep women in our institute (for more details, please refer to the following chapters). Time spent caring for children (including periods

of part-time employment) is already taken into consideration when assessing the career paths of female (as well as male) applicants.

In recruiting, female scientists have been and will be given priority where qualifications are equivalent.

Milestones planned for 2025/26

- Reinforcement of employer branding through adaption of our website (job site, career site)

3.1.2 Career Progression

Traditionally, SBA Research has a flat hierarchy. At the time of writing, the management board consists of three directors – A Min Tjoa, Edgar Weippl and Markus Klemen – and the authorized representatives Andreas Ekelhart, Stefan Jakoubi, Stephanie Jakoubi, Barbara Limbeck-Lilienau, and Peter Schedlbauer.

In case of a vacant or newly created management position, the first step is to check if it can be filled with one of our employees right away. If this is not possible, we evaluate whether an employee can and would like to acquire the necessary qualifications. As a last step, the position will be advertised publicly. If a woman and a man with identical qualifications apply, the woman will be favoured.

In this reporting period, we focused specifically on career progression in research: Based on our qualitative survey (interviews conducted by our external gender expert in autumn 2024), we have been able to identify the following beneficial factors and barriers for career progression in research:

Beneficials:

- FemTech internships
- Networking/teamwork
- Inclusive work environment

Barriers:

- Missing transparent structures/job descriptions
- Organizational challenges for caregivers

Based on these results and ensuing recommendations we are currently working on:

- a conclusive career mapping and job descriptions for research positions at SBA,
- a concept for using our CAMs[12] as a personnel development tool or install some other format for personnel development, and
- providing recommendations for more feedback and guidance for juniors regarding papers, proposals and project management.

SBA also offers its employees a comprehensive portfolio of further training opportunities, provided by internal and external experts. Some of these trainings take place on site, others online. These training courses are not limited to research or technical topics but also encompass support for individual growth across all career levels and useful skills for everyday working life, such as speaker training, time and task management, advanced Excel, and leadership and communication.

Apart from the gender competence, diversity and inclusion training (see Training), two time and self-management training sessions were offered to all employees in this reporting period. One training session focused on stress management for SBA's management and team leads.

Furthermore, we offer over 100 different online courses to encourage our employees to further develop their expertise beyond their core competencies. These include courses in software development, machine learning, data science, business, personal development, design, marketing, office productivity, health, and fitness (e.g. Python for Data Science, Machine Learning Bootcamp, Microsoft Excel, and CISSP, Yoga, Home Workouts, Best Practices for Working Remotely, Habit 101, Resilience Masterclass, Inclusive Marketing).

Milestones completed in 2024/25

- ✓ Sectoral Analysis completed (October 2024)
- ✓ Qualitative Analysis completed (October 2024)

Milestones planned for 2025/26

- Career Mapping for Research completed
- Revision/Adaption of Career Advancement Meetings completed
- Concept for Career Development Measures completed

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[12] Career Advancement Meetings, i.e. meetings between our scientific director and every researcher to discuss their research and next steps.

3.1.3 Promotion of female talent and SBA as a stepping stone

Generally, in Austria, the under-representation of female graduates cannot be ignored. For instance, in the winter term of 2023/24, women accounted for 30.6% of students at TU Wien[13]. In the field of informatics, only 18.6% of students were female, and even fewer women graduated (15.8%). This is mirrored in the employment rates with just 18% of female employees in the Austrian IT sector[14], or, for example, only 13% women in the German cybersecurity sector[15].

To contribute to mending this "leaky pipeline", we want to give young female talents the opportunity to get a glimpse of everyday working life in information security. This aim is especially helped along by an FFG program which funds internships for female students (formally known as FEMtech). From April 2017 until March 2025, we received funding for 70 young female researchers, 25 of whom we continued to employ after their internship ended; ten of them are still working at SBA at the time of writing. These numbers do not account for those who stayed on after their internship and then left to work in the industry or at another research institution resp. university. The majority focused on finishing their BSc and MSc studies after the internship. Those staying with SBA Research became junior researchers while pursuing MSc and PhD degrees; on one occasion, a former intern of ours became "FEMtech Expert of the Month"[16].

An example for a possible career path of a female researcher at SBA is one of our key researchers, Johanna Ullrich: She started with summer jobs and an FFG FEMTech internship at SBA, then was granted her first information security research project (FFG Bridge 1, CyPhySec). After completing her doctorate and other successful research projects, she became a senior researcher, founding and supervising a new research group (ERIS – Networks and Critical Infrastructures Security Group). In 2020, she became a key researcher at SBA while holding a senior researcher position at the University of Vienna. In March 2025, she began a two-year full professorship in Communication Technologies at the University of Vienna.

SBA Research will continue to actively encourage women to study and work in ICT by making use of respective funding schemes and offering a culture favourable to integrating professional and private goals researchers might have.

We encourage and financially support female employees to advance their education through extra-occupational studies, also by facilitating the use of governmental programs like educational

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[13] TUW in Zahlen, 2025: https://www.tuwien.at/tu-wien/ueber-die-tuw/zahlen-und-fakten [last accessed 25.07.2025]

[14] Futurezone: 6 Tipps für Frauen, die in die IT einsteigen möchten. Online: https://futurezone.at/b2b/it-computer-informatik-data-science-womeninict-frauen-frauentag-jobs/402353784 [last accessed 25.07.2025]

[15] (ISC)²: (ISC)²Cybersecurity Workforce Study. A critical need for cybersecurity professional persists amids a year of cultural and workplace evolution, 2022, p.38-41). Online: https://media.isc2.org/-/media/Project/ISC2/Main/Media/documents/research/ISC2-Cybersecurity-Workforce-Study-2022.pdf?rev=1bb9812a77c74e7c9042c3939678c196 [last accessed 25.07.2025]

[16] https://www.femtech.at/expertinnen/datenbank/67872 [last accessed 25.07.2025]

leave or educational part-time.[17] After completing their studies, our employees may move to a higher position. For example, Stephanie Jakoubi: She has been working at SBA Research for over 12 years, also initially as an intern. After gaining experience as a project manager in commercial and research projects, she is now an expert in connecting industry, research and governmental bodies and very committed to the empowerment of women in IT and is generally involved in numerous networks and organizes corresponding events and initiatives (see Increase visibility of women in ICT). She also is studying Information Security Management at the UAS Upper Austria Campus Hagenberg. In 2023, Stephanie formed the team SPACE (Strategic Partner Management, Communication, Conferences and Events) and joined SBA's managing team as authorized representative, while working part-time.

Another example is Veronika Nowak, who has started as part-time employee in personnel administration, then took over the coordination of research grants while pursuing a Master degree in "Science and Technology Studies". She now holds a senior position and contributes her scientific and interdisciplinary expertise to various projects.

In addition, we promote women beyond the boundaries of our institute. Trying to artificially retain female researchers that are approached by prestigious academic institutions and universities is not in line with our understanding of career advancement. This way, we actively contribute to increasing the number of women in high-level positions in cybersecurity-related institutions.

We would like to present two examples that demonstrate our approach: Katharina Krombholz and Martina Lindorfer. Katharina Krombholz started as an intern at SBA, followed by a six-year research career which included writing and finishing her PhD at SBA before joining CISPA in August 2018. Since January 2022, she is tenured faculty at CISPA and head of the Usable Security Group, Empirical and Behavioural Security Research Area. Martina Lindorfer worked as a researcher at SBA while writing her PhD thesis, followed by a two-year guest visit at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She returned to Austria in 2018, receiving a tenure-track position at TU Wien. Since 2019, she has been a Key Researcher at SBA and since 2023 she has been assigned to the Institute of Logic and Computation at the Faculty of Informatics at TU Wien as Associate Professor for Security.

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[17] Educational leave and educational part-time were funded measures to enable employees to engage in lifelong learning. Under certain conditions, employees received an allowance from the Public Employment Service (AMS) for the participation in further education. The statutory regulations on continuing education/part-time education allowance expired on March 31, 2025.

Milestones completed in 2024/25

> ✓ Qualitative analysis based on interviews with female scientists (October 2024)

Milestones planned for 2025/26

- Higher participation in the intership for female students program by FFG even though there are some barriers
- Concept for career development measures completed

Long-term milestone

- Increase of the share of female scientists, especially on senior level

3.2 Work-life balance and inclusive organizational culture

We aim to promote gender equality through organizational culture. We have policies to ensure an open and inclusive working environment, which cover the following topics:

3.2.1 Measures for work-life integration

We offer different measures to make sure that our employees can have a work-life-balance that suits them. This includes not only flexible work time and part-time employment, but also the possibility of remote work. Accordingly, there is no difference between the career paths of part-time and full-time employees. All roles are also possible in part-time, even in management and other leading positions.

3.2.2 Family-friendly organizational culture

Our policies for family support are in accordance with Austrian law, which secures parental leave for mothers and fathers/second parents. We are happy to report that, besides mothers, a significant number of fathers/second parents is making use of this possibility. We have highly flexible working time arrangements and support and regard caring responsibilities.

For our colleagues who are pregnant or have given birth recently, we provide a number of services, from talks and tips about childcare to arranging and coordinating parental leave with their family needs. In accordance with Austrian law, we are supporting parental part-time.

Milestones in 2024/25

✓ Adaption Mommy-to-be-Guide
✓ New: Second-parent-to-be-Guide

Milestones planned for 2025/26

• Promotion of the new guidelines (focus on fathers/second parents)

3.2.3 Inclusive communication

Gender-inclusive language

We developed a guide to gender-inclusive language with concrete practical examples. We consider gender-sensitive language to be important, because language influences our thinking, and women are made visible through language. In addition, we want to express the equal treatment regardless of sex or gender as a democratic principle by naming all sexes and eliminate stereotypical wording.[18] We also regularly communicate updates regarding this topic in our SummitUp meetings, for example our updated language guide, including a recommendation for the "Genderdoppelpunkt" in all German texts instead of the "Binnen-I"[19]. This way, our language does not only actively include women but also non-binary people. This is of course a fluid process since language itself is subject to constant change which we will implement accordingly. Therefore, all our content will be adapted gradually. In the next step, we will discuss address and pronouns with our Community of Practice.

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[18] Stadt Wien: Leitfaden für geschlechtergerechtes Formulieren und diskriminierungsfreie Bildsprache, 2022. [Online] https://www.wien.gv.at/medien/service/medienarbeit/richtlinien/pdf/leitfaden-richtiges-formulieren.pdf [last accessed 25.07.2025]

[19] Binnen-I refers to the use of the capital letter I inside the word as a means of gender-equitable spelling in German. The Binnen-I came under criticism as it emphasizes gender dichotomy and only refers to the grammatically masculine and feminine word forms. Other forms as the gender-asterix, the gender-underline or the gender-colon (Gender-Doppelpunkt) were introduced. We decided to use the gender-colon for reasons of technical accessibility,

Internal and External Communication

Based on the recommendations of external expert Nicole Schaffer, we analysed the following contents to determine ways to improve our internal and external communication and make it more inclusive:

- External communication: Website (analysis by Nicole Schaffer), news posts on website, LinkedIn posts
- Internal communication: CRM, HR management templates, internal information pages (SBA Info, InfoSec), all.intern emails and posts in the internal messenger service as well as onboarding presentations

The documents were randomly checked for gender-inclusive spelling and, depending on the type of document, also analysed for gender-relevant content and visual representation.

In general, it should be noted that communication at SBA Research is in most cases bilingual; the working languages are German and English. While German is a predominantly gender-based language – and therefore requires significantly more work in order to be gender-appropriate – many English terms are not gendered.

In summary, there is still room for improvement in both internal and external communication. Gender-inclusive language has been implemented, although distinctions must be made between the two corporate languages and according to the type of communication: gender-inclusive language is significantly better implemented in English and externally than internally and in German. In terms of content, the topic is still underrepresented, the GEP is very difficult to find on the website and, apart from a few keywords, there is hardly any information or activity on the topic (e.g. activities to make women visible, representation of women in the news posts, etc.). This problem also applies to internal communication; apart from the guidelines on gender-inclusive language, there is little information on the SBA info page.

Therefore, we developed the following communication strategy:

1) Improving the positioning of the topics Gender, Equality and Diversity
   a. Externally: better positioning of the GEP and related topics on the homepage
   b. Internally:
      i. creation of an internal page for the topic of equal opportunities
      ii. update of outdated materials (e.g. Mummy-to-be-Guide)
      iii. increasing employee awareness (e.g. via presentation at SBA Strategy Day, SummitUp, etc.)
      iv. evaluation of the reporting process
2) revising the language of the existing content that is regularly in use, especially in the HR templates and internal information pages

3) For the Website and Social Media, we suggest raising awareness for gender-inclusive language in general and to focus on future texts.

4) The adaptation of the ICM system to gender-inclusive language would be our least priority, since it is probably associated with the greatest costs while having a comparatively small impact.

Milestones completed in 2024/25

- ✓ Communication Analysis (October 2024)
- ✓ Strategy for Involvement and Communication (November 2024)
- ✓ Internal Site Equal Opportunities (April 2025)
- ✓ Website: Site Equal Opportunities (May 2025)
- ✓ Employment contracts – inclusive language ("dienstnehmende Person" instead of "Dienstnehmer")[20] (April 2025)

Milestones planned for 2025/26

- Update of all HR Templates
- Update Guideline Gender-Inclusive Language with special focus on e-mail correspondance (pronouns in signature, how to adress somebody when knowing their gender)

3.2.4   Accessibility

Over the past two years, we have placed an increasing focus on accessibility. Several employees have attended training courses on digital accessibility, and we have subsequently developed company-wide concepts and guidelines. During this reporting period, we created guides for converting Word documents into accessible PDFs (including how to use the PAC2024) and for creating accessible PDFs based on LaTeX documents.

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[20] The word "Dienstnehmer", which is used by default in employment contracts, is the generic masculine and does not reflect the gender of the person signing the contract. We therefore looked for an alternative that all future employees could identify with.

Milestones completed in 2024/25

> ✓ Accessibilty Guide
> ✓ Accessibility Infos LaTeX
> ✓ Measures implemented for digital accessibility (homepage)

Milestones planned for 2025/26

- Accessible new website

3.2.5   Measures against Discrimination

SBA has a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to any form of discrimination or harassment, which of course includes gender-based violence. This is furthermore defined in SBA's Code of Ethics (available our intranet): "Diversity is valued and promoted by the organization. The institute rejects any discriminatory behaviour towards a person or group." In practice, such behaviour will, depending on its severity, result in a strong reprimand of the offender or the termination of their employment.

The works council, founded by SBA's staff in 2016, serves as a first point of contact in all labour-related matters, including discrimination and gender-based violence, and is bound by a duty of confidentiality. Currently, the works council consists of Gerald Sender (chair), Nicholas Petri (vice chair), Veronika Nowak, Markus Edermayer and Kevin Mallinger. In need of consultation by the works council, SBA colleagues contact the member of their choice. Only if approved, the provided information is shared with the other works council members. The works council furthermore serves as a point of contact for management and regularly proposes (improvements of) measures for anti-discrimination, providing feedback for management. In the case of discrimination or harassment, the works council accompanies the necessary processes, primarily representing the victim.

One very practical measure to create safe spaces at SBA was to allocate two of our four restrooms as all-gender (leaving one for women and one for men), so that LGBTQAI+ persons are not excluded.

In the next reporting period, the Office of Equal Opportunities will further develop and communicate our anti-discrimination procedures in collaboration with the works council and management. The aim is to raise awareness and provide reliable guidance in cases of unequal, discriminatory or violent treatment for all employees. The first steps in this direction were taken by our head of

Office of Equal Opportunities attending the "Exzellente Forschung braucht den richtigen Rahmen" conference.

Milestones completed in 2024/25

> ✓ Conference: "Exzellente Forschung braucht den richtigen Rahmen" (May 2025)

Milestones planned for 2025/26

- Follow-Up "Exzellente Forschung braucht den richtigen Rahmen"
- Guideline for Measures against discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual violence

3.3 Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

During the reporting period, we closely examined the integration of the gender dimension in our research activities, for example:

- The Internet is a man-made infrastructure, the field of ICT is still dominated by male engineers.[21,22] This might lead to (implicit) decisions that represent male perception over-proportionally, e.g., when balancing security vs. efficiency.[23,24]
- Energy Poverty: Women are more vulnerable to suffer from energy poverty due to lacking economic resources than other demographic groups.[25]
- Blackout prevention[26]: we learned that men tend to miss female-connoted life aspects (e.g., picking up children from school or kindergarten) in their disaster preparedness plans.

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[21] World Economic Forum, "The gender gap in science and technology, in numbers," 2021. [Online] https://www.wefo-rum.org/agenda/2021/07/science-technology-gender-gap/ [last accessed 25.07.2025]

[22] UNESCO, "UNESCO Science Report," 2021, [Online] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377433 [last accessed 25.07.2025]

[23] C. Dawson, "Gender differences in optimism, loss aversion and attitudes towards risk," British Journal of Psychology, vol. 114, no. 4, 2023.

[24] M. Mather and N. R. Lighthall, "Risk and Reward Are Processed Differently in Decisions Made Under Stress," Current Directions in Psychological Science, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 36-41, 2021.

[25] European Parliament Research Service, "Gender aspects of energy poverty," 2023. [Online] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/266210/EPRS_ATA(2023)739349_EN.pdf [last accessed 25.07.2025]

[26] A. Klauzer and J. Ullrich, „Erstellen von Blackout-Szenarien für das Projekt E-Region KUUSK," Regionalmanagement Kufstein, 2021. [Online] https://www.rm-kuusk.at/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Enbericht-Blackout-Szenarien-KUUSK_gekuerzt.pdf [last accessed 25.07.2025]

The appropriate consideration of gender and diversity in research contributes to the quality of the research in general. By creating sufficient awareness for related issues, we hope that the topic will become more firmly anchored in the company, that new synergies will arise and that the chances of exploiting the research results will be increased. In doing so, SBA will also meet the increased focus of national and international funding agencies on issues of gender and diversity.

We conducted a workshop for team and project leads to raise awareness for gender-biased R&D and introduce sex- and gender-analyses as well as intersectional approaches for information security research. The feedback was very positive, and we are optimistic that our new guideline "Gender in Information Security" will help to address this topic thoroughly in new project proposals and to increase the depth and societal impact of our research.

Furthermore, we offered a diversity workshop as part of our CTI qualification network, which is funded by FFG. During this workshop, we discussed the impact of diverse team structures on the effectiveness and problem-solving capabilities of CTI and SOC teams, and pertinent gender- and diversity-related threats (e.g. doxing).

Milestones completed in 2024/25

- ✓ Training Gender in Information Security (February 2025)
- ✓ Guideline Gender in Information Security (March 2025)
- ✓ Training Diversity CTI (May 2025)

Milestones planned for 2025/26

- Evaluation and Update of the Guideline Gender in Information Security
- Workshop with new best practices and updated guideline

3.3.1   Fostering gender balance in research teams

SBA will continue to actively encourage women by offering a corporate culture favourable to integrating professional and private goals. To this end, we have the following measures in place:

- Continue and intensify the visibility of our female researchers and employees, thus provide a credible narrative about female career paths to students and undergraduates
- Promote young female talent

- Create an atmosphere of trust where we integrate the life-worlds of women into everyday working culture
- Considering time spent caring for children as well as parental leave when looking at the career paths of male as well as female employees

As there is a great deal of overlap between the chapters Career Progression, Promotion of female talent and SBA as a stepping stone, Family-friendly organizational culture and Increase visibility of women in ICT in this area, we have decided not to list any separate milestones here.

3.3.2   Increase visibility of women in ICT

SBA Research is also taking active steps to make women in ICT more visible. In terms of networks, we not only support the VÖSI special interest group WOMENinICT, but we were involved in founding Women in Privacy & Security Vienna, a platform by female experts from SBA Research, TU Wien, and University of Vienna. The mission of this group is to encourage interdisciplinary (technical) exchange linked to privacy and security, offer a safe space for female and non-binary people, help female and non-binary students and academics of technical studies, provide support for career planning in academia and business, and grow a community and network.

Another network that emerged from Women in Privacy & Security Vienna is the female hacker training programme, 'Hackerinnen', also known as Shecurity. The initial aim was to assemble an all-female team to participate in the Austrian Cyber Security Challenge. Subsequently, in collaboration with CSA Cyber Security Austria and the CysSec Centre, a training programme was developed covering a wide variety of topics. These regular, free training courses are aimed at girls and FINTA* persons interested in information security and keen to learn more about its technical side. Each training session usually has around 30 participants. During the reporting period, the initiative won two prestigious awards: the eAward 2024[27] and the Women in Tech Community Initiative 2024[28]. Shecurity is not only the name of the training programme; it also denotes a network of over 170 women who communicate via various channels, such as email and Signal. The network includes interest groups for risk management and CISO round tables, as well as four general round tables per year. In September 2024, we also had the opportunity to present Shecurity to Alexander van der Bellen, the President of Austria, at the IKT Security Conference.

SBA Research is also working with SheDigital Wien which has grown from 30 to 70 networks, initiatives and sponsors since 2022. A major highlight was "die IT-Tag" on December 9th, 2024: over 240 female role models spent time with students from 82 schools in 170 sessions, discussing

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[27]   https://www.report.at/award/24087-eaward-2024-grosse-bandbreite-in-der-digitalisierung-ausgezeichnet [last accessed on 15.06.2025]
[28]   https://www.womentech.net/blog/women-in-tech-global-awards-2024-winners-women-in-tech-community-initiative-year-non-corporate [last accessed on 15.06.2025]

their personal journeys, careers in ICT, and the exciting potential within fields like cybersecurity, programming, and research. With nearly 4,200 pupils participating, this initiative left a significant mark on the next generation, offering a fresh perspective on what it means to work in IT. This innovative initiative focused on igniting curiosity, dismantling stereotypes, and showcasing the boundless opportunities in the tech world, particularly for girls.

As always, we regard our current and former female employees teaching at Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences as role models, showing students that there is a professional future for women in ICT.

Highlights 2024/25

> ✓ Active participation in 2 networks (Shecurity, She.Digital)
> ✓ 8 Shecurity/Hackerinnen trainings
> ✓ Participation and/or organization of more than 30 events that directly or indirectly promote the visibility of women in Cybersecurity

4 Summary and Outlook

We are very happy with the progress we have made this year. Although promoting women, equal rights and diversity has always been important to us at SBA Research, we have only been able to address these issues to such a great extent thanks to the Fem4CyberSec project.

Summary of milestones/highlights of this reporting period

- ✓ Increasing gender competence on all levels through training and workshops
- ✓ gender mainstreaming process/revised Horzion-adequate GEP as management and monitoring tool (including definition of indicators)
- ✓ Various analyses (current status, sectoral, qualitative interviews, communication)
- ✓ Installment of an Office of Equal Opportunities (May 2025)
- ✓ Regular Meetings of Community of Practice Gender and Equality
- ✓ Strategy document for Involvement and Communication and first measures taken, e.g. central positioning of matters of Equal Opportunities (internal site and website)
- ✓ New Guides, e.g. Accessibilty Guide, Accessibility Infos LaTeX, Guideline Gender in Information Security (March 2025)
- ✓ Various efforts for increasing the visibility of women in ICT (networks, trainings, events)

Outlook/summary of planned milestones for the next reporting period

- First evalution based on the new monitoring process
- Adaption of measurements and process if necessary
- Further training to increase gender competence
- Concept for Career Development Measures completed
- Career Mapping for Research completed
- Higher participation in the intership for female students program by FFG
- Promotion of the new guidelines
- Implementation of further measures from the communication strategy
- Guideline for Measures against discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual violence

5 Appendix

5.1 List of Figures

5.2 List of Tables