

Gender Equality Plan

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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 completed a project called "Fem4CyberSec"¹; in this reporting period, we

- mapped career paths at SBA Research and drew up a concept for career development measures for women,
- reinforced our inclusive company culture by providing guidelines for dealing with discrimination and sexualized violence, and
- revised and adapted our gender mainstreaming process according to the findings of our monitoring.

With a new project called EWOK (currently in the proposal phase; funding scheme FFG DIVER-ISTEC), we now further aim at

- embedding DEI competencies within the organization through an intersectional approach and a training concept tailored to specific target groups,
- revising, refining, and implementing measures from the career action plan developed in Fem4CyberSec with regard to other diversity categories, and
- strengthening employer branding and community building by establishing a career page, an alumni network, and fostering closer ties with other research institutions.

Markus Klemen, CEO SBA Research, June 2026, Vienna



¹ Project funded by FFG, funding scheme: FemTech Karriere, duration: 01/07/2024 to 31/03/2026.

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 stability². 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 (19% 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 21.4% of female doctoral graduates in Information and Communication Technologies in Austria (for comparison: 21.1% in Germany, 24.3% EU-27 average).^{5, 6}

Over the last two years, and thanks to the work in our project Fem4CyberSec, we were able to intensify and professionalize our activities for gender mainstreaming. A key milestone was the revision of the GEP and its publication in July 2025. For this new GEP, we introduced specific parameters and indicators to embed gender equality as a continuous and actively managed process. As part of developing the GEP, the gender mainstreaming process was also reviewed and advanced, ensuring its long-term integration into our organizational structures. Additionally – within the framework of the GEP and in close collaboration with management and the works council – we established binding guidelines for addressing discrimination and sexual harassment.

This is the first regular update of our new and revised GEP.

The second focus of this reporting period was on the systematic analysis and further development of career paths for researchers. Based on these analyses, we developed a concept for targeted career development measures for women with seven clearly defined goals. In parallel, we expanded internal and external communication on gender, diversity, and inclusion, among other by establishing an internal platform and a new webpage.

Overall, Fem4CyberSec has created sustainable structures, processes, and awareness-raising measures that will continue to have an impact beyond its duration.

² Nicole Voigt, Marcus van der Vegte, Isabell M. Welp: 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 25.06.2026]

³ European Commission (2024): Women in Digital Scoreboard 2024. Online: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/women-digital-scoreboard-2024> [last accessed 25.06.2026]

⁴ (ISC)²: Cybersecurity Workforce Study. A critical need for cybersecurity professional persists amidst 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 (2025): Education and Training Monitor – Austria. [online] <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor/en/monitor-toolbox/country-page/austria.html> [last accessed 25.06.2026]

⁶ European Commission (2025): Education and Training Monitor – Germany [online] <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor/en/monitor-toolbox/country-page/germany.html> [last accessed 25.06.2026]

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 site⁷ on our webpage and on our internal Equal Opportunities Site (MS Teams). This GEP version is the sixth update based on data collected for the COMET⁸ reporting. The management's commitment is documented by their signature above. All updates are presented at our SummitUP, a company-wide, biweekly virtual meeting format.. Topics, measurements and processes behind the Gender Equality Plan are furthermore presented at events like the SBA strategy seminar (next one coming up in November 2026).

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 the time of writing). 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 31/03/2026) enabled SBA Research to comprehensively address gender and equality issues and set up 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

⁷ <https://www.sba-research.org/equal-opportunities/> [last accessed 25.06.2026]

⁸ 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 2025 to March 2026.

- 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 2025/26

- ✓ Career Mapping for Research and Concept Career Development Measures completed (March 2026)
- ✓ First completed Monitoring and Evaluation Cycle (June 2026)
- ✓ 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.

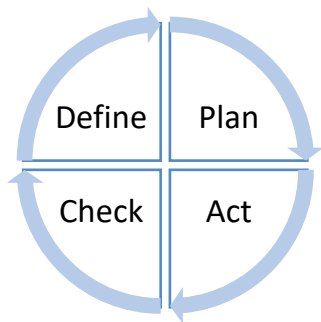


Figure 1: Gender Mainstreaming Process

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 focus on the following parameters for our monitoring:

(1) Personnel (head count, FTEs and respective female share)

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

(2) Research

- Number of female SBA researchers who are actively publishing as (co-)authors
- Number of (co-)author contributions to publications by female SBA researchers

(3) Work-Life-Balance (viewed separately for female and male employees)

- Part-time employment
- Parental part-time
- Part-time leadership
- Parental Leave

(4) Networking/Outreach (number)

- Events
- Networks

(5) 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)⁹. Please note that the starting point for the two sources differs: (i) a specific *cut-off date* is used for the AUFO, whereas the COMET data always refer to a full reporting period, and (ii) different *calculation bases*. Therefore, we monitor the following parameters in accordance with the AUFO cycle (i.e., every two years).

(1) Personnel: Between 2024/2025 and 2025/2026, the share of women increased slightly in many categories (e.g. Key/Senior/Junior Researchers, Project Leads), remained unchanged in others (e.g. Management), and decreased in two categories (Scientific Board, Works Council). The decrease of the female share in the Scientific Board is due to two female members leaving, and the work council was newly elected during the reporting period.

(2) Research: In total, the number of publications decreased slightly, but the female share, both for publishing (headcount) and number of contributions remained stable.

(3) Work-life Balance: We noticed a decrease of the female share in most of the categories, whereas the male share increased (e.g. in categories part-time employment, part-time leadership, parental leave); the category parental part-time remained stable. This could be a sign that traditional gender roles among company staff become less pronounced. However, there are still more women taking parental leave than men; for a more conclusive statement, we must observe the development over the next years.

(4) Networking/Outreach: With regard to our networking activities – aimed at promoting and raising the visibility of women in IT – the numbers have remained consistently high. For gender mainstreaming network activities and events, the numbers stayed the same.

(5) Training/Capacity: Here, we had a strong focus on external training programs for key personnel during the reporting period, although the total number of activities remained largely unchanged. The number of guidelines and recommendations published also remained constant, even though the topics they address naturally change over time (see e.g. 2.4). The increase in external training activities compared to the previous year was driven by a targeted focus on the professional development of key personnel.

Milestones completed 2025/26

- ✓ First evaluation based on the new monitoring process (June 2026)

⁹ https://www.bmimi.gv.at/themen/innovation/publikationen/menschen_qualifikation_gender/Gleichstellungserhebung-2024.html
[last accessed 25.07.2025]

Milestones planned 2026/27

- Next evaluation based on the monitoring process (June 2027)
- 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, the focus was primarily on (1) providing continuing education for key staff, and (2) developing a broader, intersectional approach—that is, moving away from a narrow focus on gender competence toward a broader understanding of diversity. This direction will also be pursued in a new project EWOK – Establishing Workforce Diversity through Organizational Knowledge (under submission in the FFG DIVERSITEC program at the time of writing). With EWOK, we plan to include a new fundamental training for all employees covering the topics of diversity, discrimination and sexual harassment; furthermore, we want to offer a more specialised training on diversity for interested parties.

Title of In-House Training	Date	Participants	Content
Gender Equality Plan	13.10.2025	All employees	Introduction of the Gender Equality Plan as a living document
Office of Equal Opportunities	16.03.2026	All employees	Presentation of results of the Fem4CyberSec project and future activities, among others submitting a proposal to the DIVERSITEC programme

Table 1: In-House Trainings 2025/2026

External Training	Date	Participants	Content
DIVERSITEC Netzwerk-Treffen	10.09.2025	EquO	120 leaders and innovators from the R&D sector gathered for the Diversitec network meeting as part of the FFG Forum. The afternoon focused on an open, constructive exchange on innovation and DEI—with a clear message: Diversity is not a side issue, but a key factor in sustainable innovation.
Diversity Breakfast – Diversity als Innovationsmotor	16.10.2025	EquO, HR	Innovation arises where different perspectives come together, routines are challenged, and new approaches are conceived. In a complex and fast-paced world, diversity is no longer

			optional, but a strategic necessity. Two inspiring corporate examples, supported by the Diversity Think Tank, demonstrated how these initiatives can be successfully implemented in practice.
Diversity Facilitator	Oct. 25 – Feb. 26	EquO	Certified part-time course, contents: diversity research in depth, including equal opportunities and anti-discrimination, foreign and human rights, media and digital skills, intercultural communication and conflict management, as well as methodology and didactics.
Re:think Diversity	22.10.2025	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.
Diversity Breakfast – Von wegen gleiche Chancen	29.01.2026	EquO, HR	Insight into the various dimensions of social background as a diversity category: economic conditions, cultural codes, educational background, language, networks, leisure activities, and much more – it is not a single characteristic, but rather a web of social, economic, normative, and cultural conditions and factors.
Diversity Lunch – Inklusive Toiletten	12.03.2026	EquO, HR	Restrooms in the workplace: how should restroom facilities be designed to be accessible and usable by as many people as possible, and why this space is so crucial for fostering a sense of belonging in our daily work lives.
Wie umgehen mit sexueller Belästigung im Hochschulkontext	22.04.2026	EquO	Framework conditions at the TU Wien for a non-discriminatory research environment were discussed, the topics included discrimination, sexualized discrimination, sexual harassment and exclusion.
Gemeinsam stärker: Männer als Mitgestalter einer inklusiven Arbeitswelt	19.05.2026	EquO, HR	High-level diversity event organized by CSR Circle, HR Circle, and the Diversity Think Tank. The event explored how organizations can involve men in diversity processes constructively and authentically. Discussions focused on increasing accessibility, credibility, and motivation while creating environments in which men can engage openly and without fear of judgment or role-related pressure.

Table 2: External Trainings 2025/2026

Milestones planned for 2026/27

- Re:think Diversity 2026, congress and workshops
- Presentation at Strategy Day
- New training formats for employees developed

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 increased (after last year’s drop) from 24% to 28%. Our female share of scientists is and always will be subject to fluctuation due to several reasons, foremost that 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](#)). Furthermore, our participation in the FFG female talent internship program is subject to fluctuations, due to not only a tighter subject focus in the program, but also stagnating grants in face of inflation-increased salaries.

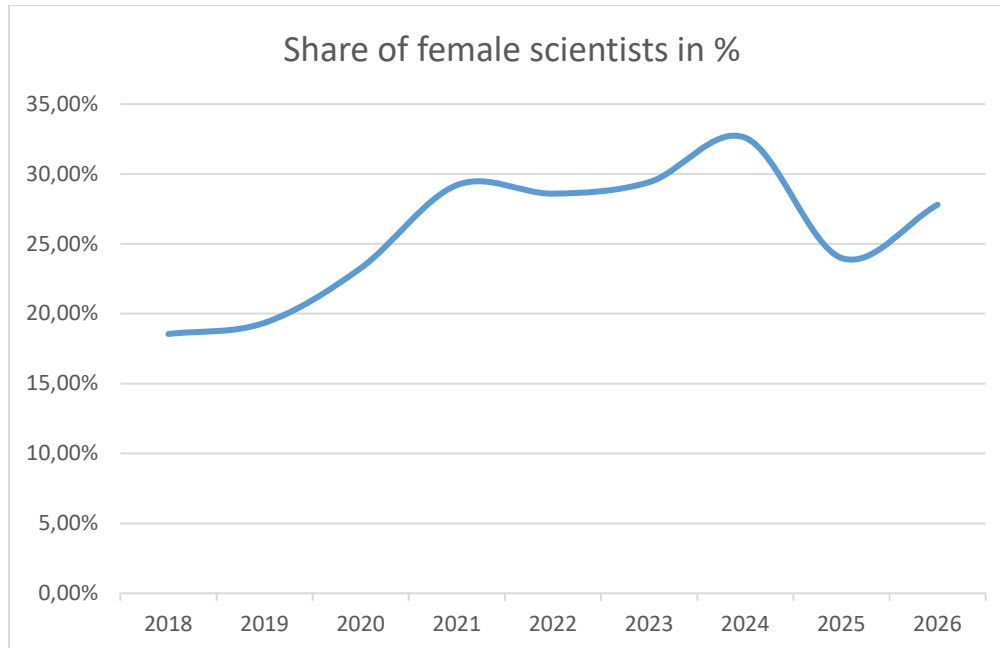


Figure 2: Share of female scientists during our SBA-K1 COMET project (March 2018 to March 2026)

Milestones completed in 2025/26

- ✓ Research Career Mapping completed (February 2026)
- ✓ Concept for Career Development Measures completed (March 2026)

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 promote 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 are our teaching activities at TU Wien and the University of Vienna. We offer a variety of internships, e.g., FFG Internships for female talents, IAESTE positions and professional internships. These internship programs are intended and have served as stepping stones into long-term careers at SBA. Six former interns (not counting FFG female talent internships) 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 FFG's female talent 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 measures to keep women at 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 2026/27

- 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 immediately with one of our employees. 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 finalized a structured internal career model for researchers in order to increase transparency and fairness in career development and progression. The model provides a clear framework for recruitment, qualification, and advancement within the organization and contributes to reducing structural barriers and increasing equal opportunities in scientific careers.

A central objective of this measure was to make research career paths within SBA Research more transparent and comprehensible, particularly for early-career- and female researchers. The model defines a competence-based progression of scientific roles, from Research Intern and Research Assistant to Researcher (R1 and R2) and Senior Researcher, and clarifies the expectations, responsibilities, and development opportunities associated with each stage. In addition, specific roles such as Research Team Lead, Key Researcher, and Research Director are described, making leadership pathways more visible and accessible.

The career model is aligned with European framework for research careers¹⁰ and incorporates principles of fair and transparent recruitment, gender equality and diversity. By clearly defining competencies, development steps, and evaluation criteria, the model helps to reduce informal decision-making processes that can disadvantage women in research careers.

Building on the research career mapping, we also developed a comprehensive concept for targeted career development measures aimed particularly at supporting female researchers. The concept recognizes that, as a non-university research center, traditional long-term academic career paths such as professorships are per definition not possible. Therefore, career development measures are designed not only to support internal progression but also to prepare researchers, especially women, for successful academic and leadership careers beyond SBA Research.

The concept introduces several structural measures. Career Advancement Meetings (CAMs) can be developed into a central instrument for structured and transparent career planning, including the documentation of research achievements, leadership experience, funding acquisition, and long-term career goals. Clear and transparent criteria for scientific progression – such as publication output, proposal acquisition, leadership responsibilities, and international visibility – were defined in order to support fair evaluation and career planning.

In addition, we proposed measures to strengthen academic competitiveness and visibility, including internal peer-review processes for publications and proposals, opportunities for junior researchers to lead work packages or contribute as principal investigators, and increased support for conference participation, networking, and research supervision. Mentoring structures and external mentoring opportunities could support interdisciplinary transitions, career planning, and the development of international academic networks.

The concept further includes measures to improve inclusive work organization, strengthen cross-team collaboration, broaden recruitment channels to reach more female candidates, and establish a more systematic talent pipeline for female researchers. Retention strategies, particularly for early- and mid-career researchers, focus on transparent career planning, early responsibility in research tasks, and continuous mentoring. Progress will be monitored through indicators such as female representation at different career stages, participation in publications and proposals, leadership roles, and retention rates.

Overall, the introduction of the career model and the creation of the accompanying career development concept represent important structural measures to promote gender equality and an

¹⁰ European Commission, "Towards a European Framework for Research Careers", 2011. [Online] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy_library/towards_a_european_framework_for_research_careers_final.pdf

inclusive career development at SBA Research. By increasing transparency, formalizing development pathways, and strengthening targeted support for female researchers, the project contributes to creating more equitable conditions for scientific careers both within the organization and in the wider research landscape.

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.

With EWOK, we plan to revise the Concept for Career Development Measures with an intersectional approach, including other selected diversity categories; in the long-term, we will develop and put in motion several of the proposed measures.

Milestones completed in 2025/26

- ✓ Career Mapping Research completed (February 2026)
- ✓ Concept for Career Development Measures completed (March 2026)

Milestones planned for 2026/27

- Revision of the Concept for Career Development Measures with an intersectional approach, including selected diversity categories
- Further develop and implement some of the career development measures of the concept
- Extension of the Career Mapping for other departments of SBA Research

3.1.3 Promotion of female talent and SBA as a stepping stone

Generally, in Austria, the under-representation of female graduates in STEM fields, especially informatics, is significant. For instance, in the winter term of 2024/25, women accounted for 34.1% of students at TU Wien¹¹. In the field of informatics, only 22.0% of students were female, and even fewer women graduated (16.6%). This is mirrored in the employment rates, where only 18% of

¹¹ Technische Universität Wien, Wissensbilanz über das Berichtsjahr 2025: https://www.tuwien.at/fileadmin/Assets/tu-wien/Ueber_die_TU_Wien/Berichte_und_Dokumente/Wissensbilanz/TUW_Wissensbilanz_2025.pdf [last accessed 11.06.2026]

employees in the Austrian IT sector¹² are female (see also Germany, with just 13% women in the cybersecurity sector¹³).

SBA's contribution to mending this "leaky pipeline" is to introduce young female talents early on to 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 2026, we received funding for 80 female interns, 25 of whom we continued to employ after their internship ended; eleven 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"¹⁴.

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 as well as additional 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 limited full professorship in Communication Technologies at the University of Vienna, and with February 2026, she got appointed Professor for Security at IT:U Linz.

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 leave or educational part-time.¹⁵ 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

¹² 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]

¹³ (ISC)²: (ISC)²Cybersecurity Workforce Study. A critical need for cybersecurity professional persists amidst 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]

¹⁴ <https://www.femtech.at/expertinnen/datenbank/67872> [last accessed 25.07.2025]

¹⁵ 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.

bodies and very committed to the empowerment of women in IT. She is involved in numerous networks and organizes corresponding events and initiatives (see [Increase visibility of women in ICT](#)). She is, furthermore, 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 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.

We also 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.

In addition to Johanna Ullrich, 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 (Germany) 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; in 2023, she was assigned to the Institute of Logic and Computation at the Faculty of Informatics at TU Wien as Associate Professor for Security.

Milestones completed in 2025/26

- ✓ Higher participation in the internship for female students program by FFG (from seven internships in 2024/2025 to twelve internships 2025/2026)
- ✓ Concept for Career Development Measures completed

Milestones planned for 2026/27

- Further development of selected career development measures of the concept, following an intersectional approach

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 for remote work. Accordingly, there is no difference between the career paths of part-time and full-time employees. All roles can be fulfilled 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 2025/26

- ✓ Promotion of the new Guidelines for parents, focus on fathers/second parents (March 2026)

Milestones planned for 2026/27

- Awareness-raising for managers on inclusive work-life practices (fair workload distribution, meeting culture, support for employees with caring responsibilities)
- Increasing visibility of part-time career paths and leadership roles in part-time

3.2.3 Inclusive communication

Building on the communication strategy developed in the previous reporting period, we continued to revise and expand our internal communication materials. In particular, existing templates were adapted to reflect gender-inclusive language, and the internal guide for gender-inclusive language was further expanded. In March 2026, new content on the use of pronouns and inclusive forms of address was developed and integrated. This section highlights the importance of pronouns as part of personal gender identity and provides practical guidance for respectful communication. It introduces different categories of pronouns, including traditional pronouns, forms of address, and non-binary pronoun options used in both German and English. The guide emphasizes the importance of respecting individuals' self-identification with regard to names, titles, and pronouns.

To facilitate inclusive everyday communication, the guide also includes practical recommendations for situations in which a person's pronouns or preferred form of address are unknown. These include the use of neutral greetings, addressing individuals by their full name, using functional titles in formal correspondence, and applying inclusive collective forms of address. Employees are also encouraged to include their pronouns in their email signatures to promote clarity and respect in professional communication.

As part of the ongoing revision of our internal guidance on gender equality and inclusive workplace practices, we also introduced a clear procedure for updating personal data such as first names, last names, and civil status within SBA's internal systems. This measure was designed to support employees whose personal data may change due to marriage, divorce, or bureaucratic processes related to gender identity and transition. The new system enables employees to request such updates easily and confidentially through the HR department. Once requested, the relevant changes can be implemented across internal systems and documents, including email accounts, access credentials, and staff profiles on the institutional website. The procedure also clarifies how internal updates interact with official documentation and external authorities where applicable. By establishing this transparent process, SBA ensures that employees are addressed correctly in

accordance with their identity and legal status, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and respectful working environment.

Through these additions and revisions, this document now provides more comprehensive guidance on inclusive communication and further strengthens awareness of gender diversity within the organization.

Milestones completed in 2025/26

- ✓ Update HR-Templates (February 2026)
- ✓ Update Guideline Gender-Inclusive Language with special focus on e-mail correspondence (March 2026)
- ✓ Procedure for updating personal data (January 2026)

Milestones planned for 2026/27

- Promotion of the updated gender-inclusive language guide across the organisation
- Integration of inclusive communication principles into the onboarding process for new employees

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.

There were delays in launching the new, accessible website; it is now scheduled for the next reporting period.

Milestones planned for 2026/27

- 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 defined in SBA's Code of Ethics (available on 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), Rosalind Hester, Markus Edermayer and Ludwig Kampel. 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 this reporting period, the Office of Equal Opportunities has developed and communicated anti-discrimination procedures in collaboration with the works council and management which resulted in guidelines with a clear definition of unwanted behaviour, a concept for prevention and clear steps in case of discrimination or sexual harassment. The aim is to raise awareness and provide reliable guidance for all employees in case of unequal, discriminatory or violent treatment.

Milestones completed in 2025/26

- ✓ Guidelines for Measures against Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (March 2026)
- ✓ Session on creating a non-discriminatory research environment at TU Wien (April 2026)

Milestones planned for 2026/27

- Developing and hosting a training about Measures against discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual violence for all employees

3.3 Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

In the last 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.^{16, 17} This might lead to (implicit) decisions that represent male perception overproportionally, e.g., when balancing security vs. efficiency.^{18, 19}
- Energy Poverty: Women are more vulnerable to suffer from energy poverty due to lacking economic resources than other demographic groups.²⁰
- Blackout prevention²¹: We learned that men tend to miss female-connotated life aspects (e.g., picking up children from school or kindergarten) in their disaster preparedness plans.

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 (1) the topic will become more firmly anchored in the company, (2) new synergies will arise and, (3) 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.

Due to internal processes, we were unable to implement the milestones planned for 2025/2026. We intend to address these in the next reporting period.

Milestones planned for 2026/27

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

¹⁶ World Economic Forum, "The gender gap in science and technology, in numbers," 2021. [Online] <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/07/science-technology-gender-gap/> [last accessed 25.07.2025]

¹⁷ UNESCO, "UNESCO Science Report," 2021, [Online] <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000377433> [last accessed 25.07.2025]

¹⁸ C. Dawson, "Gender differences in optimism, loss aversion and attitudes towards risk," British Journal of Psychology, vol. 114, no. 4, 2023.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ European Parliament Research Service, "Gender aspects of energy poverty," 2023. [Online] [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/266210/EPRS_ATA\(2023\)739349_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/266210/EPRS_ATA(2023)739349_EN.pdf) [last accessed 25.07.2025]

²¹ 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]

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 providing 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 female and male 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 persons, 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 2024²² and the Women in Tech Community Initiative 2024²³. In September 2025 the first Shecurity Summer School took place: Around 65 talented and curious women and FINTA* immersed themselves in the exciting world of cybersecurity at the University of Vienna. This continuing education and networking program is unique in Europe and is designed to make it easier to enter and advance in IT security. Overall, since 2024, Shecurity has assembled more than 450 community members, 300+ training participants, and over 60 hours of training.

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, 2025: 260 female role models spent time with students at 90 schools in more than 200 classrooms, discussing their personal journeys, careers in ICT, and the exciting potential within fields like cybersecurity, programming, and research. With approximately 4,000 pupils participating, the second instalment of 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 2025/26

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

²² <https://www.report.at/award/24087-eaward-2024-grosse-bandbreite-in-der-digitalisierung-ausgezeichnet> [last accessed on 15.06.2025]

²³ <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]

4 Summary and Outlook

We are very happy with this year's progress. Although promoting women, equal rights and diversity has always been important to us, SBA Research has only been able to address these issues to such an extent thanks to the Fem4CyberSec project. We are looking forward to advance this further – adopting an intersectional approach to include further diversity categories – through EWOK, an FFG DIVERSITEC project (currently under submission).

Summary of milestones/highlights of this reporting period:

- ✓ First evaluation based on the new monitoring process
- ✓ Trainings to increase gender competence, especially for key personnel
- ✓ Concept for Career Development Measures completed
- ✓ Career Mapping for Research completed
- ✓ Higher participation in the internship for female students program by FFG
- ✓ Guideline for Measures against discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual violence
- ✓ Various efforts for increasing the visibility of women in ICT (networks, trainings, events)

Outlook/summary of planned milestones for the next reporting period:

- Broadening our approach from gender mainstreaming to an intersectional approach for diversity, equity and inclusion (FFG DIVERSITEC project EWOK, under submission)
- Trainings to increase diversity competence
- Development of some of the measures from the Concept for Career Development
- Extension of the Career Mapping for other departments at SBA Research
- Promotion of the new guidelines

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