Gender Equality Plan

Document History

Document Name   SBA_GenderEqualityPlan_v2.docx

Version	Authors	Date	Notes
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)

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

In our opinion, diversity in thought and action, as well as diversity in the way challenges are viewed, are a great advantage, especially in a world as fast-moving as ours. This shows in various aspects of our working life, for example, teams consisting of different people are more likely to have a holistic view of problems. Furthermore, a balanced gender ratio leads to more stability and greater success[1]. This is due to the different approaches to problems as well as to different social competencies that can positively influence team stability. Furthermore, living diversity and at the same time creating a corporate culture that excludes discrimination automatically benefits from high employee satisfaction. Ultimately, what matters is how people (can) contribute their strengths and see themselves as part of an institution's success.

Therefore, we are committed to address the issue of Gender Equality proactively and regularly. In 2018, we already drafted a first plan on addressing the shortage of women in leading positions at SBA Research in focusing on seven different aspects:

- Career advancement program of female colleagues in leading positions
- Increase visibility of women in ICT
- Recruit more female researchers
- Special support program for female researchers
- Special career program für female employees
- Special family support program for female employees
- Supporting long-term endeavors to increase the share of females in IT Security

This plan already showed promising results, since we were able to increase our share of female employees in leading positions, in the management and in our research departments as well. But since there is still a general underrepresentation of females in the IT sector, there is still room for more improvements. In order to fulfill our aims (see Aspects of Gender Equality Plan) we updated our plan from 2018 and aligned our new plan with the requirements of Horizon Europe.

To to further intensify and professionalize our activities for gender mainstreaming we submitted and received a FEMTECH Career project (Fem4CyberSec) in April 2024 Fem4CyberSec will help us to establish a company-wide process, thus facilitating systemic institutional change and support active monitoring and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement. First steps in this direction

---

[1] See R. Bendl, R. Hofmann: Frau + Mann gleich fördern = gewinnen! Gleichstellung als Erfolgsformel für Unternehmen. Stadt Wien, 2008: Gleichstellung_als_Erfolgsformel_fuer_Unternehmen.pdf (femtech.at).

have already been taken with the foundation of a Community of Practice (CoP) for Gender & Equality in 2024 and a first analysis of the current status (more information below).

2 Process requirements

2.1 Public Document

In accordance with the Horizon Europe requirements, our Gender Equality Plan is publicly available on our website (sba-research.org). This version is now the third update in line with data based on the COMET reporting (see Data collecting and monitoring). The first version was created in August 2022, the first update followed in March 2023, the second in November 2023. All updates are presented at our Summitup, a biweekly virtual meeting format open to all employees of SBA as well as associated researchers and that encourages not only the exchange between research groups, but also ensures that all departments are up to date about ongoing research projects and other activities within our center.

2.2 Dedicated resources

In order to address the following areas well, five colleagues are dedicating resources in varying degrees on the corresponding topics. These colleagues cover a wide array of activities from support for women to promoting women in ICT and Security to collecting and gathering data for our yearly report (see next chapter).

In 2024, we founded the Gender and Equality Community of Practice (CoP), where employees from nearly all departments and levels are participating (about 10 people in total).

2.3 Data collecting and monitoring

We already collect gender data on personnel on a regular basis within our yearly COMET report, which is delivered to the Austrian Research Promotion Agency FFG. In this report, we have objectives and targets as well as selected indicators to measure progress, such as number of publications, academic works or data relating to international integration. In terms of gender data, we record, for example, how many of these academic papers are (co-)authored by women, the share of women in our institute and especially in research, and also how many women are employed in leading positions at our institute. We have dedicated resources to gather all the data (two colleagues).

At the time of our last report, the share of female scientists at SBA Research in FTE was 32,59%, which is far above the average of female personnel in information security (see Gender equality in recruitment and career progression). However, we would like to note that this percentage is subject to fluctuation and will continue to be so in the future. This is the case for several reasons:

Firstly, we intensively and successfully encourage the careers of our female scientists, which includes helping them to get scientifically prominent positions at universities (see also Gender equality in recruitment and career progression). Secondly, many of our female scientists take the opportunity to take educational leave or go on maternity leave (see also Gender equality in recruitment and career progression). This can lead at times to notable decreases of the share. In this last reporting period, however, our strong participation in the FFG FemTech program led to a significant increase of female scientists. As explained in more detail in Gender equality in recruitment and career progression, some of the internships also led to permanent employment and therefore to an increasing number of highly qualified female researchers in general.
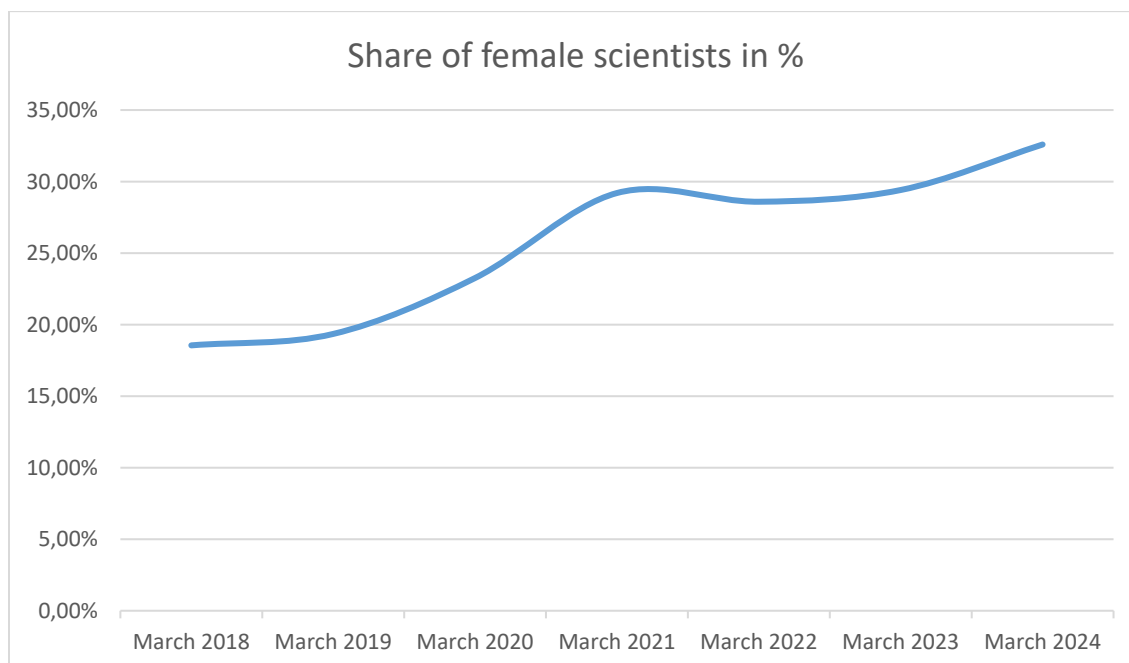
Figure 1: Share of female scientists

Another important source of data is the biennial BMK Gender Equality Survey for non-university research (AUFO). It is important to note that the starting point for the data differs slightly from that of the COMET report, firstly because a specific cut-off date is used, whereas the COMET data always refer to a full reporting period, and secondly because different calculation bases are used. We intend to investigate this discrepancy in more detail in the Fem4CyberSec project. The AUFO also clearly shows the need to go one step further and no longer analyze data in binary form, but to expand it to include the "diverse" category.

2.4   Training

We are currently devising awareness-raising and training actions on gender equality in the form of talks (e.g., about gender-neutral language), individual trainings and regularly trainings.

The regularly trainings engage the whole organization and are planned as ongoing and long-term process. In these trainings, we cover unconscious gender biases training aimed at staff and decision-makers and also include communication activities and gender equality training that focuses on specific topics. In November 2023, for example, a workshop especially designed for our management took place, tackling different topics concerning gender and diversity to increase awareness and open new possibilities and views on potential new measures.

Of course, there is always the possibility of individual training as well. For example, one of our employees attended a 3-days-training on gender mainstreaming and diversity management according to AMS criteria in November 2022. Another colleague attended a research-oriented training (Habilitation - approaching an academic ritual) for women-only in 2021.

The planned Fem4CyberSec project also includes trainings with an external gender expert, talking topics such as Gender Equality Expertise for Management & Key Persons, Gender in organizational and leadership culture; career advancement for female scientists or Gender in information security research ("gendered innovation").

In addition to classic trainings, we also offer other events on the topic of gender and diversity, for example our own sessions at our conferences, such as Sec4Dev (see Increase visibility of women in ICT) , networking events and the like. This gives women in particular the opportunity to exchange ideas, form networks and benefit from each other's wealth of experience.

3 Aspects of Gender Equality Plan

3.1 Work-life balance and organizational culture

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

3.1.1 Measures for work-life integration

We offer a vast array of different measures to make sure that our employees can have a work-life-balance that suits them. This includes not only flexible- and part-time possibilities, but also the possibility of remote working and home office. Accordingly, a career path in part-time does not differ from the career path in full-time. All positions are also possible in part-time, even in management/leading positions.

3.1.2 Special family support program

Inclusive work-life balance policies and practices include parental leave policies for both men and women, which are utilized by both men and women. We have highly flexible working time arrangements and support and regard caring responsibilities by, for example, providing child supervisors for certain SBA events so that both men and women are not hindered to participate in these events due to parental duties at home.

For our colleagues who either recently gave birth or are currently pregnant we have a support system which offers them a broad range of services, from talks and tips about childcare to arranging their workdays in alignment with their family needs. We are also offering part-time contracts and/or home office, making it easier for our colleagues to balance their family life with their work life.

3.1.3 Gender-sensitive language

We developed a guide to gender-sensitive 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 stereo-typical wording[2] We also regularly present updates regarding this topic in our SummitUp meetings, for example on January 17th, 2022, during which we presented our updated language

---

[2] bmukk: Geschlechtergerechtes Formulieren, 3. Aktualisierte Auflage Wien 2012.

guide, including a recommendation for the "Genderdoppelpunkt" in all German texts instead of the "Binnen-I". 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. The next topic we will address concerns forms of address and pronouns – which will be discussed with our Community of Practice in the framework of the Fem4CyberSec project.

3.2 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Traditionally, SBA Research has quite a flat hierarchy. The management board consists at the moment of our 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 whether it can be filled by one of our employees. If this is not possible, an evaluation is made as to whether an employee can and would like to acquire the necessary qualifications through a Career Program. If this is not the case, the position will be advertised publicly. If a woman and a man with identical qualifications apply, the woman will be favored.

Our Career Program is supervised by our management. Needs and opportunities of researchers are identified in the so-called "Career Advancement Meetings" (CAMs), or staff appraisals, at least once a year.

The "Career Program" is open to all employees. CAMs are also used to determine whether the employee has the desire to pursue a career change and whether this is compatible with the goals of the institute. If both applies, the team lead works out a concept jointly with the employee on how the personal Career Program can be designed in order to achieve the carrier goals. During the Career Program, there are numerous feedback rounds to check that the course taken corresponds to the employee's ideas and the institute's goals.

Due to the vast amount of existing knowledge and different research and commercial areas at SBA, we can provide a variety of trainings and events for our employees. Furthermore, we offer over 100 different online courses for our employees to encourage our employees to further improve even on fringe areas of their expertise. This includes courses for software development, machine learning, data science, business, personal development, design, marketing, office and productivity, health, fitness, and more (e.g., Python for Data Science and Machine learning bootcamp, Microsoft Excel, CISSP, etc.). The existing mix of offline and online trainings provided by SBA helps our employees to acquire needed skills and assimilate needed knowledge by providing a certain degree of flexibility. These trainings are not limited explicitly to research or expert

topics, there are also trainings for qualifications which are useful for the everyday working life (e.g., speaker trainings, time & task management, advanced Excel, or leadership and communication).

The fact that SBA is committed to its employees and promotes and supports them in every possible way is also demonstrated by our handling of internships. Hiring interns is an important recruitment mechanism at SBA. We offer a variety of internships, e.g., FEMTech, IAESTE and professional internships, and aim at keeping the interns long-term. Apart from the FemTech internships, which will be highlighted in Gender equality in recruitment and career progression, we also offered more than 20 young people the opportunity to get a taste of various areas of IT security since 2017. Of these, ten are still working at SBA today (five persons in research, five in professional services).

3.3 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Job advertisements are drafted gender- and diversity-sensitive to reach all relevant target groups for SBA-K1. Job offers include job descriptions, areas of responsibilities, career development aspects, and measures for work-life-integration (flexible- and part-time as well as home office and remote working, etc.) to establish SBA as a family-friendly employer.

To recruit female researchers, job offers are communicated also within the FEMtech Scientist Community, further using the FEMtech database and online platform to directly contact qualified female scientists in the respective areas. In this context, we are also focusing on our wording in job advertisements: Especially power and status-related characteristics, such as ambition and assertiveness, often contradict women's self-image. Descriptions of tasks, on the other hand, tend to look more attractive.

We will i.a. further recruit excellent female scientists, continue, and intensify the visibility of our female researchers and employees, and expand the measures to keep women in our institute. For example, time spent caring for children (including periods of part-time employment) has no impact when assessing the career paths of male as well as female applicants.

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

3.3.1   Promotion of young female talent

Generally, in Austria, the under-representation of female graduates cannot be ignored. For instance, in the winter term 2022 the overall share of female students at TU Wien was 30.6%[3]. Informatics had only 18.6% female students, and even fewer women graduated (15.8%).[4] This is mirrored in the employment rates with just 18% of female employees in the Austrian IT sector[5], or, for example, only 13% women in the German cybersecurity sector[6].

From April 2017 until March 2021, SBA Research employed/supervised five female PhD students and sixteen female master students. This is a significant increase compared to the previous four years of COMET center (three female PhD students and four female master students), but also indicates to the "leaky pipeline". From March 2021 to March 2024, we have been employing/supervising three female PhD students and nine female master students so far.

To help to mend this "leaky pipeline", we want to give young female talents the opportunity to get a glimpse of everyday working life in IT Security. This aim is especially helped along by the FFG funding program FEMtech: from 04.2017 until 09.2023, more than 50 young female researchers have been given an insight into the world of information communication security. The success of theses internships is shown by the fact that we continued to employ many of these interns as scientists after their internship (17 of them even stayed with us for over six months, eleven of whom are still working for SBA-K1 at the time of writing), not counting other female employees who stayed on after their internship and then left to work in the industry or another research institution/at university. The rest returned to their universities to finish their BSc and MSc studies. Those staying with SBA Research became junior researchers while pursuing MSc and PhD degrees; one was selected as "FEMtech Expert of the Month".

An example for a possible career path of a female researcher at SBA is one of our key researchers, Johanna Ullrich: She initially took summer jobs at the software development team at SBA Research as well as with a company partner, after which she collected research experience in the context of an FFG FEMTech internship. This allowed her to gain first impressions of what the everyday work in research actually looks like. She wrote a project proposal, which was granted and enabled her

---

[3] TUW in Zahlen, 2022: https://www.tuwien.at/tu-wien/ueber-die-tuw/zahlen-und-fakten [last accessed 12.04.2024]

[4] TUW in Zahlen, 2022: https://www.tuwien.at/tu-wien/ueber-die-tuw/zahlen-und-fakten [last accessed 12.04.2024]

[5] 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 12.04.2024]

[6] (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 12.04.2024]

to continue research into information security (FFG Bridge 1, CyPhySec). After completing her doctorate, she became a senior researcher, founding and supervising a new research group (ERIS – Networks and Critical Infrastructures Security Group); finally, she became an SBA key researcher in January 2020 and is holding a senior researcher position at the University of Vienna.

In addition to the research-oriented internships, we also offer the opportunity to start a commercial career path with our "Professional Services". Here, too, there is the opportunity to get a taste of everyday working life through internships, and existing employees always have the chance to gain experience at the other area. Thus, there have already been several changes between the areas (e.g., one FEM-tech joined the consulting department of SBA Research, transferring her scientific knowledge to practical applications in an industrial context, another Fem-tech supported various departments before settling in Communications and one employee who worked for Professional Services for years now provides practical inside for our research in Automotive Security).

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 favorable to integrating professional and private goals researchers might have.

3.3.2 Special career support program for female employees

We actively encourage and financially support female employees to advance their education with extra-occupational studies. Therefore, we use possibilities like educational leave or educational part-time – and after completing their studies, our employees can move up to a higher position. Stephanie Jakoubi is an excellent example of how SBA-K1 succeeds in promoting women. Stephanie Jakoubi has been working at SBA Research for over 12 years, also initially as an intern. She later joined the software development department where she gained first experiences as a project manager. After switching to the research department, she developed and supervised projects for knowledge transfer and trainings, working closely with company partners. Thus becoming an expert in connecting industry, research and governmental bodies, she established SBA's SPM – Strategic Partner Management. Furthermore, she is studying Information Security Management at the UAS Upper Austria Campus Hagenberg. Stephanie Jakoubi is very committed to the empowerment of women in IT and is a founding member of women's associations and networks (more detail 3.4.2). She is generally involved in numerous networks and organizes corresponding events and initiatives (see Increase visibility of women in ICT). In 2023, she 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 working part-time in administration, then started to work within COMET

and now, due to her master studies in Science and Technology Studies", she holds a senior position and brings in her scientific and interdisciplinary expertise in 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 as tenure-track faculty in August 2018. Since January 2022, she is tenured faculty at CISPA and head of the Usable Security Group, Empirical and Behavioral Security Research Area. She is still closely connected to SBA. Martina Lindorfer worked as researcher at SBA while writing her PhD thesis, followed by a two-year guest visit at the University of California, Santa Barbara and returned to Austria in 2018, receiving a tenure-track position at TU Wien. Since 2019, she is a Key Researcher at SBA.

3.4 Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

We are committed to include sex and gender analysis into our research projects. We already worked on this aspect in two research qualification projects in the form of mandatory gender equality workshops, ensuring that the gender dimension is considered in research and teaching, in the first project even before this was a mandatory requirement by the funding agency. This way, we want to offer support and capacity for researchers to develop methodologies that incorporate sex and gender analysis. These workshops will be the basis for our internal yearly training mentioned in section 2.4 Training.

As mentioned in the Introduction, within the new Fem4Cybersec project we want to further explore the following topics in more detail: Gender (bias) in research content, gender relevance of research, gender in the project team. Therefore, a workshop with interactive training will take place, to raise awareness of gender-biased R&D and to provide an introduction into sex- and gender-analyses and intersectional approaches in information security research. This will lead to a creation of related guidelines that hopefully will help to open up to new research fields in general.

3.4.1   Fostering gender balance in research teams

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

- Provide a credible narrative to students and undergraduates, i.a. continue and intensify the visibility of our female researchers and employees (see Increase visibility of women in ICT).
- Promote young female talent as described in Gender equality in recruitment and career progression.
- Create an atmosphere of trust where we do not only deal with the life-worlds of women but integrate them into everyday life.
- Consider specialties in target values by considering the time spent caring for children as well as maternity/paternity leave when looking at the career paths of male as well as female employees.

3.4.2   Increase visibility of women in ICT

SBA Research is also taking active steps to make women in ICT more visible. We plan to publish a third edition of our brochure "Women and IT Security Research", featuring female employees and alumnae of SBA Research in all kinds of professional fields. Female researchers also took time to participate in initiatives such as techNIKE of TU Wien to hold workshops especially aimed at girls. Other activities include school visits, Wiener Forschungsfest, Young Researchers Day, etc. pp. For example, in December 2024 (at the birthday of Grace Hopper), together with She.digital (see below) we are planning a school initiative. This is still in the early stages of planning, but the vision is as follows: Over 200 women working in IT will visit schools and promote IT careers, targeted at girls at the age of 13/14. This will not only include a presentation of the various possibilities of working in IT, their own experiences in this area, but also of the secondary schools that promote such careers. We furthermore 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.

We also address the topic in our own events, e.g., at the sec4dev Conference & Bootcamp 2021 one of the special sessions was "Women in IT – we are no Aliens!" with more than 50 participants. The event was open to women only with the aim to inspire, empower and connect women in IT by discussing how to overcome this occasional "alien" feeling of working in a male-dominated field. In addition, inspired by the lively exchange at the conference, Stephanie Jakoubi generated an informal survey with the hashtag #wearenoaliens, dedicated to various issues in this area. In a very short time, 200 women participated and shared their stories and experiences. The results

showed that the participants had 107 different job titles on their business cards. Stephanie Jakoubi presented the key findings and most impressive highlights to an international audience at the Womentech Global Conference in June 2021. In 2022, the sec4dec hosted a follow-up session called "Women in IT – we are here to stay" which also was a huge success. We also established a diversity grant for the sec4dev Conference & Bootcamp so that women or other minority groups can participate in the know-how and knowledge offered by this conference.

Furthermore, we hosted the first women* session of our conference ARES in 2023, which provided a safe space for exchanging ideas, building connections, and empowering the presence of women*. At the IMPACT 2023, our annual event for partners, researchers and everyone who is interested in what SBA Research is working on, both keynotes were held by women: "Differential Privacy" by Prof.in Dr.in Monika Henzinger, Professor at the Institute of Science and Technology Austria (#ISTA) and Visiting Researcher at the Universität Wien at the Faculty of Computer Science and "Rigorous Software Engineering" by Univ.Prof.in Dr.in sc. Maria Christakis, Full Professor at TU Wien Informatics.

In terms of network, we not only support VÖSI special interest group [WOMENinICT](), but we were involved in founding the [Austrian Chapter of Women4Cyber](). Women4Cyber is a non-profit organization aimed at promoting, encouraging, and supporting the participation of women in the field of cybersecurity. The Chapters exist to support women in the field of cybersecurity at a national level (in 15 different countries). In October 2023, e.g., together with the Austrian Chapter SBA Research was for example present at the IKT Sicherheitskonferenz at the "Women Security Stammtisch" and to celebrate the first birthday of the Chapter, Women4Cyber together with Google invited to a talk about Cybersecurity and AI, which was moderated by our authorized representative Stephanie Jakoubi.

A similar aim is targeted by [Women in Privacy & Security Vienna](), which has been founded by female experts from SBA Research, TU Wien and University of Vienna (Members of VISP Vienna Security Privacy Research Cluster Vienna) in 2022. The mission of this group is to encourage interdisciplinary (technical) exchange linked to privacy & security, offer a safe space to female and non-binary people, to help female and non-binary students and academics of technical studies, support for career planning in academia and business and to grow a community and nurture a network.

We also host regularly events for Women4Cyber and Women in Privacy & Security Vienna at SBA Research.

Another network that has emerged from Women in Privacy & Security Vienna is the ACSC Hackers. Initially, the aim was to find an all-female team to take part in the European Cyber Security Challenge, from which, in cooperation with CSA Cyber Security Austria, a training plan with 16 different

training sessions for different levels of prior knowledge (beginner and advanced) has developed, which is open to anyone with an interest in the topic - whether schoolgirls, students or career changers with some knowledge of information technologies.

Furthermore, SBA Research regularly co-hosts events for She.Digital.Wien, which includes more than 30 networks of women in ICT. One of the highlights of 2023 was the event "Leading like Grace Hopper" in June 2023, where more than 100 female IT experts discussed the topic leadership. Former SBA employee Yvonne Poul also offered a deep dive session there regarding positive leadership.

3.5 Measures against discrimination and gender-based violence (including sexual harassment)

Our "SBA declaration" includes – among others – a zero-discrimination-tolerance policy, which of course includes gender-based violence including sexual harassment. One of the foundations of this declaration lies in our Code of Ethics that is also available for all our employees on our intranet. The Code states:

"Diversity is valued and promoted by the organization. The institute rejects any discriminatory behavior towards a person or group."

In practice, such behavior, depending on its severity, would result in either a strong reprimand or the termination of the work contract.

Moreover, in addition to the classic toilets for men and women, to have a place of retreat and shelter if desired, SBA Research has also installed unisex toilets in the office premises, which are open to all genders, so that nonbinary persons are not excluded.

The work council, founded by SBA's staff in 2016, serves as a first point of contact in all labor-related matters, including discrimination and gender-based violence, and is bound by a duty of confidentiality, creating a safe space for SBA staff. After the 2nd election in 2020, the work council consists of Johanna Ullrich (chair), Gerald Sendera (vice chair), Veronika Nowak, Simon Tschulik and Kevin Mallinger. In need of consultation by the work council, SBA colleagues contact the member of their choice. Depending on the distinct matter, a colleague might choose a member of the same/different department, gender, etc. From our perspective, this establishes confidence to share even delicate matters with the work council. Only in the event of approval, the provided information is shared with the other work council members. The work council present themselves when onboarding new employees.

As a representative of the staff, the work council also serves as a point of contacts for management and regularly propose (improvements of) measures for anti-discrimination, providing feedback for management. According to Austrian law, the work council has to be involved by management in termination of contracts and dismissal, and potential consequences of discrimination for the perpetrator. In case that such an issue would be raised, the work council would mediate such processes to protect primary the victim's, secondary the institute's interests.

4 Summary and Outlook

As already mentioned, values such as equality and diversity have a very high priority in our institute. Measures to promote women have already been in place for years, are regularly evaluated and revised or supplemented in line with the results. With the Gender Equality Plan, we are taking a further step in this direction.

Accordingly, we will also revise and update the Gender Equality Plan once a year. This will be done in a similar way to our COMET report, which collects the relevant key figures and compiles the activities of a reporting year in a clear form.

We also intend to initiate a more in-depth process in line with the GEP. This process will include identifying and addressing previously unknown areas of concern, as well as more measurable monitoring of progress. To start this process with the help of designated gender experts, we started a FEMTECH Career project (Fem4CyberSec). With Fem4CyberSec, we aim to further intensify and professionalize our activities for gender mainstreaming, and establish a company-wide process, thus facilitating systemic institutional change and support active monitoring and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement. First steps in this direction have already been taken in preparation of this project, with the foundation of a Community of Practice (CoP) for Gender & Equality in 2024 and a first analysis of the current status: While, for instance, network initiatives, work-life-balance, and parental leave (maternal as well as paternal) are considered to be well implemented, other areas such as gender competence and awareness, equal and inclusive career paths or data analysis will be reassessed for further improvement.

Table 1: SBA Self-Assessment: Examples for successful equality activities and areas for improvement

Successful Activities to Continue	Areas for Improvement or Implementation
Network Initiatives & Social Interaction	Implement Equality Officer
FEMtech Trainee program	Awareness-Raising Trainings
Equal Pay	Promotion Measures for Female Scientists
Gender-Balanced Team-Leads and Management	Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Measures
Work-Life Balance, Flexible Working Time, Home Office	Structured Career Models (for Female Researchers) considering blind spots
Parental Leave	Data analysis (quantitative/ qualitative); Impact analysis of measurements
Community of Practice	Analysis of Gender (Bias) in R&D (STEM)

All of these aspects will be established and elaborated in the new, company-wide gender mainstreaming process and corresponding fact- and evidence-based measures will be implemented.

In accordance with the Horizon 2020 criteria[7], our GEP will not only document and accompany this process, but serve as a management, implementation, and revision tool too.

The installment of a gender and diversity officer role as a central interface for these topics goes hand in hand with this aim, providing a single point of contact and better tools to monitor the measures and progresses. This leads to a decreased need of resources because the topic is centralized.

---

[7] European Commission (2021): Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans. Luxembourg, 2021.

5 Appendix

5.1 List of Figures