

Gender Equality Plan 2026-2027

for the Hungarian Centre of Excellence for Molecular Medicine

Hungarian Centre of Excellence for Molecular Medicine, 2026



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACF – Advanced Core Facility

HUN-REN BRC – Biological Research Centre Szeged

SU – Semmelweis University

USZ – University of Szeged

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

EDC – Equality and Diversity Committee

EMBL – European Molecular Biology Laboratory

GEP – Gender Equality Plan

HCEMM – Hungarian Centre of Excellence for Molecular Medicine

1. INTRODUCTION

The Hungarian Centre of Excellence for Molecular Medicine (HCEMM) is working on research and development related to healthy ageing. For the administration of the HCEMM programme, the HCEMM Nonprofit Kft. was incorporated by the HUN-REN Biological Research Centre Szeged (HUN-REN BRC), the Semmelweis University (SU) in Budapest and the University of Szeged (USZ). The European Molecular Biological Laboratory (EMBL) functions as the advanced partner of HCEMM. In addition to the initial EU Teaming Grant that led to the establishment of HCEMM, the Centre of Excellence has also been awarded the status of National Laboratory in Hungary in 2020. Research and development activities at HCEMM are carried out by research groups and advanced core facilities. The main focus of research and development is the development of molecular approaches (diagnostics as well as treatment) for healthy ageing. Three research pillars related to non-infectious ageing-related diseases have been established (Immuno-inflammatory, Metabolic and Cardiovascular Diseases as well as Genomic Instability and Cancer). In addition, a fourth pillar related to infectious diseases (co-morbidities) was established in 2021. The research groups are supported by four ACFs (Functional Cell Biology and Immunology, Single Cell Omics and In-vivo Imaging, Scientific Computing), which work closely with EMBL.

The Hungarian Centre of Excellence for Molecular Medicine is committed to fostering a work environment that values and promotes gender equality in all aspects of its operations. Recognizing the importance of gender diversity and inclusivity, we have developed this Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in alignment with the European Union's guidelines to address gender imbalances and promote equal opportunities in the field of health research. Additionally, HCEMM adopts an intersectional approach, acknowledging that gender equality is deeply interconnected with other aspects of diversity, including nationality, age, and background.

1.1. KEY ASPECTS OF THE GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

The key aspects set out in the previous Plan remain relevant and will continue to be focused on in the coming period:

- 1. Recruitment for Leading Positions:** To break down barriers and promote gender diversity in leadership roles, we are implementing targeted measures to actively recruit women, with a specific emphasis on scientific leadership positions. By fostering an environment where talent is recognized and nurtured irrespective of gender, we aim to create a leadership team that is reflective of the rich diversity within our organization.
- 2. Structural Work-Life Balance Program:** Recognizing the importance of a harmonious work-life balance, we are committed to establishing a structural program that facilitates flexibility and support for all employees. This program will provide options such as flexible working hours, remote work opportunities, and family-

friendly policies, ensuring that individuals can thrive both professionally and personally.

3. Implementation of an Internal Whistleblowing System: In accordance with the National Act XXV of 2023 on Complaints, Notifications of Public Interest and Rules for Reporting Abuse, which contains the provisions necessary for the implementation of EU Directive 2019/1937, HCEMM has established a mechanism for internal reporting of irregular practices to receive disclosures related to – including, but not limited to – gender-based abuse, undue influence, harassment, bullying, discrimination, ethical violations or other serious violations affecting the safety and well-being of HCEMM employees. The mechanism is designed to ensure detection, investigation accompanied by prompt and decisive action on matters with principles of guaranteed anonymity and safeguards to prevent retaliation against disclosers.

4. Culture of Openness Towards Diversity: A diverse and inclusive workplace is fundamental to our values. We are actively working to cultivate a culture of openness and acceptance towards diversity in all its forms. This involves promoting awareness, fostering dialogue, and celebrating differences to create an environment where every individual feels valued and respected.

5. Integration of Gender and Diversity into Research: To enhance the impact of our research, we are dedicated to integrating gender and diversity considerations into all facets of our projects. This approach ensures that our research questions, methodologies, and outcomes are sensitive to gender-related issues, contributing to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of health-related phenomena.

In embracing these principles, HCEMM is not only striving for gender equality but is also committed to fostering an organizational culture that thrives on the diverse perspectives of its members. Through these initiatives, we aim to create a workplace where every individual has equal opportunities to excel, innovate, and contribute to the advancement of health research.

1.2. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY COMMITTEE (EDC)

The implementation of the Gender Equality Plan is executed and monitored by the HCEMM Equality and Diversity Committee (EDC). The members of the EDC are the following:

Position	Role in the EDC
Equality and Diversity Officer	Coordinator, Member
Chief Executive Officer	Member
Junior Project Manager	Member
ACF Member	Member
Scientific Communication Manager	Member

Research Group Member	Member
Financial Officer	Observer
Research Group Leader	Observer

This Gender Equality Plan applies to all employees of the HCEMM, including all permanent, full-time and part-time employees and assignees of the HCEMM Nonprofit Kft. and the HCEMM Chief Executive Officer (CEO). This policy applies to all persons without distinction of rank or protected characteristics. This Gender Equality Plan does not apply to additional employees such as contractors or consultants.

2. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

2.1. LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

The CEO has the right of independent representation in the HCEMM. At HCEMM, it is recognized that leadership plays a critical role in fostering a culture of gender equality and driving meaningful change within the research community. Leadership support is essential for ensuring that gender equality initiatives are prioritized, resourced, and effectively implemented throughout the institution.

HCEMM advocates for gender equality within the broader research community and engages with external partners to share best practices and promote collaborative initiatives. Leadership support is essential for driving progress towards gender equality at HCEMM, and also plays a pivotal role in creating an environment where all researchers, regardless of gender, can thrive and contribute to the advancement of knowledge and innovation.

2.2. COMMUNICATION

For HCEMM, it is essential to regularly communicate the organization's commitment to gender equality through internal and external channels, emphasizing the importance of diversity and inclusivity. Internally, it is ensured that all staff members are kept informed about gender equality initiatives, progress, and opportunities for involvement. Externally, the CEO actively promotes the institution's commitment to gender equality through partnerships. Furthermore, open dialogue and feedback is encouraged on gender-related issues, creating a safe and inclusive space for discussions.

3. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

3.1. GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

At HCEMM, it is ensured that all job descriptions, recruitment materials, and communications use gender-neutral language to attract a diverse pool of candidates. By employing inclusive language, it creates an environment that welcomes individuals of all genders and backgrounds to apply for positions within the institution.

3.2. DIVERSE HIRING PANELS

HCEMM emphasizes the importance of diverse representation on recruitment panels. By ensuring that selection committees include members from different genders and backgrounds, HCEMM enhances the fairness and transparency of the recruitment processes and mitigates the risk of unconscious biases.

3.3. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

HCEMM is dedicated to guaranteeing equal opportunities for career advancement and professional development for all employees, irrespective of gender. From 2026, the provisions of the EU Pay Transparency Directive (Directive (EU) 2023/970) shall serve as the guiding principles in our recruitment practices, ensuring transparent salary ranges and prohibiting inquiries into candidates' pay history. In addition, HCEMM is committed to fostering an environment where individuals can thrive based on their skills, contributions, and potential.

4. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICIES

The aim is to develop and implement flexible working arrangements to accommodate the diverse needs of employees, including remote work options, part-time schedules, and family-friendly policies. HCEMM supports remote work options for employees who may benefit from greater flexibility in their schedules. Remote work not only enhances work-life balance but also promotes productivity, engagement, and well-being. Additionally, HCEMM encourages the adoption of part-time schedules for employees who require reduced hours due to caregiving responsibilities, health reasons, or other personal commitments.

4.2. PARENTAL LEAVE

HCEMM is committed to providing comprehensive parental leave policies that promote gender equality and support a healthy balance between work and family life. Our policies recognize that both parents play crucial roles in caregiving and bonding with their children and aim to create an inclusive environment where all employees can fully participate in family life without sacrificing their career aspirations.

5. TRAINING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

5.1. GENDER SENSITIVITY TRAINING

HCEMM is committed to fostering a culture of inclusivity and awareness by conducting regular training sessions on gender sensitivity and unconscious bias for all employees. These training sessions are designed to promote understanding, empathy, and respect for individuals

of all genders, while also addressing unconscious biases that may impact decision-making and interactions in the workplace.

5.2. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

HCEMM is dedicated to ensuring equal access to training and career development opportunities for all employees, irrespective of their gender, background, or level within the organization. It is believed that investing in the growth and advancement of our diverse workforce is essential for fostering innovation, collaboration, and organizational excellence.

6. EQUAL PAY AND BENEFITS

6.1. PAY EQUITY

Salary structures are regularly reviewed and analysed to ensure equal pay for equivalent work, addressing any identified gender pay gaps. In accordance with EU pay transparency standards, the approach to salary structure review involves a comprehensive, gender-disaggregated analysis of compensation data. By examining these factors in detail, any disparities or biases can be identified that may exist and proactive steps can be taken to address them. HCEMM also ensures that employees have easy access to the criteria used to determine their pay and career progression.

6.2. BENEFITS EQUALITY

HCEMM is committed to providing gender-neutral benefits that ensure all employees have equitable access to a comprehensive range of benefits, regardless of their gender. It is recognized that employees have diverse needs and circumstances, and HCEMM strives to create an inclusive workplace where everyone can access the support and resources they need to thrive.

7. HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION PREVENTION

7.1. ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICY

HCEMM upholds a steadfast commitment to fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive work environment by enforcing a zero-tolerance policy against harassment and discrimination of any kind. At HCEMM, it is believed that every employee deserves to work in an environment free from fear, intimidation, or prejudice. When incidents of harassment or discrimination are reported, HCEMM ensures that they are promptly and thoroughly investigated in accordance with established procedures. Investigations are conducted with sensitivity, fairness, and impartiality, and appropriate disciplinary action is taken against any individuals found to have violated the policies.

7.2. AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

HCEMM recognizes the critical importance of fostering a workplace culture that is built on respect, inclusion, and zero tolerance for harassment and discrimination. To achieve this, regular and proactive awareness campaigns are conducted focused on preventing harassment and discrimination, ensuring that all employees are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources to contribute to a safe and inclusive workplace environment.

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

8.1. DATA COLLECTION

HCEMM recognizes the importance of data-driven decision-making in advancing gender equality within the organization. To this end, HCEMM is committed to regularly collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data on recruitment, retention, and career progression. By disaggregating data by gender, valuable insights into the representation, experiences, and outcomes of employees at various stages of their careers can be gained.

8.2. PERIODIC REVIEWS

At HCEMM, periodic reviews of the GEP's effectiveness are conducted and adjustments are made as needed to achieve gender equality goals. These reviews involve a comprehensive evaluation of the plan's strategies, initiatives, and outcomes to determine what is working well and where improvements are needed. Adjustment may involve refining existing strategies, introducing new initiatives, reallocating resources, or revising targets and timelines.

9. MISCELLANEOUS

By implementing this Gender Equality Plan, HCEMM is committed to creating an inclusive and diverse workplace where all individuals, regardless of gender, can thrive and contribute to advancements in health research.

The present Gender Equality Plan shall enter into force on 1 January 2026.

The Gender Balance of the HCEMM is presented in the appendix of the present document.

Szeged, 2026.01.01

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Chief Executive Officer

APPENDIX 1 – GENDER BALANCE AT HCEMM

The Appendix Nr. 1 presents the gender balance at the HCEMM as of 1 January 2026, in the certain categories covered by the survey.

HCEMM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)

The CEO of the HCEMM is female (F).

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

The Admin Team consists of 11 female employees and 4 male employees.

The gender balance of the HCEMM Admin Team is 73% female, 27% male.

ADVANCED CORE FACILITIES (ACF)

There are 4 Advanced Core Facilities at the HCEMM.

3 Heads of ACF are male, 1 Head of ACF is female. The gender balance of the Heads of ACFs are 75% - 25% with male majority.

The gender balance in the ACFs, including the Heads of ACFs and the technicians, is 56% - 44% with male majority (11 female and 14 male employees).

RESEARCH GROUPS

There are 6 research groups in the HCEMM. 5 Group Leaders are male; 1 Group Leader is female. The gender balance of the Group Leaders is 83% - 17% with male majority.

The gender balance in the research groups, including the Group Leaders and the Group Members, is the following: altogether 58 people are working in the Research Groups, 31 females and 27 males. The gender balance in the research groups is 53% - 47% with female majority.