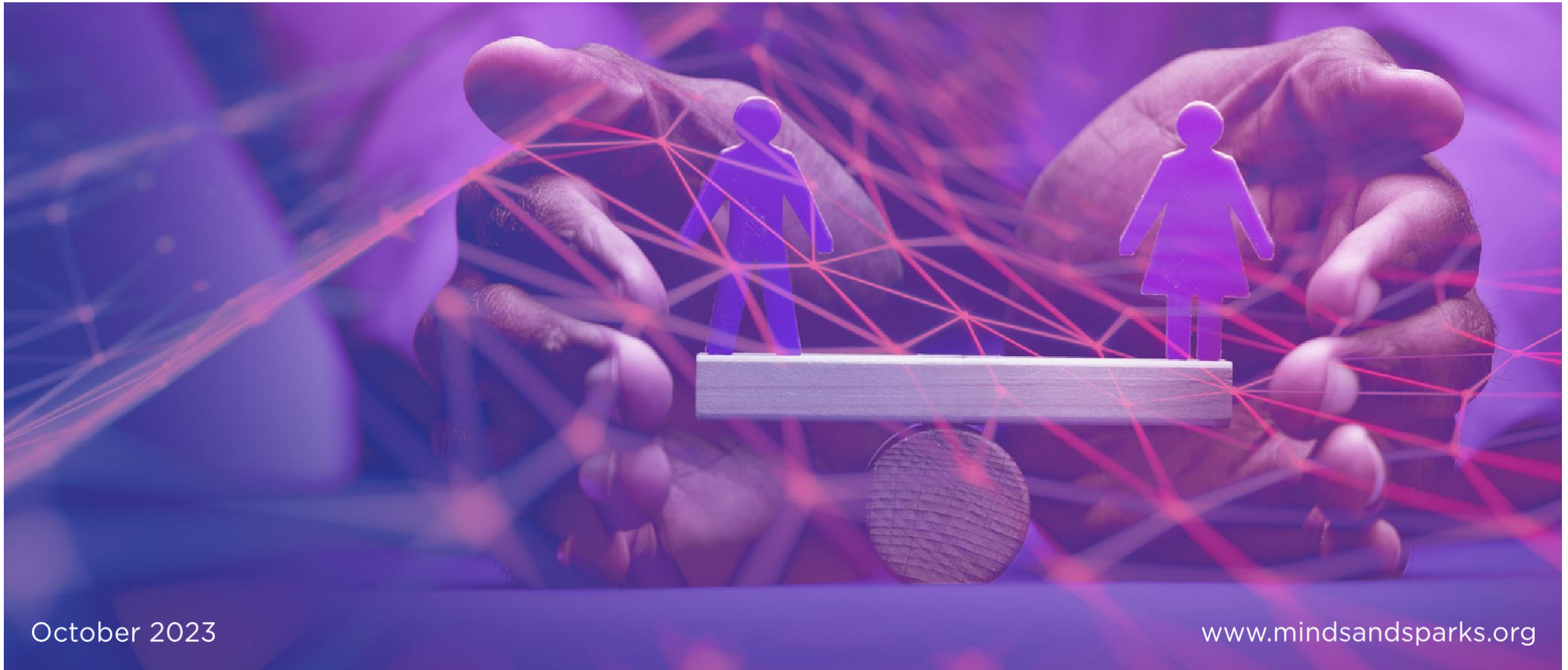


# MINDS & SPARKS

## INCLUSIVE GENDER EQUALITY PLAN



October 2023

[www.mindsandsparks.org](http://www.mindsandsparks.org)

### THE GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

Gender Equality and inclusiveness are subjects of highest priority at MINDS & SPARKS. The inclusive Gender Equality Plan is a tool to ensure diversity and equal opportunities for everyone by continuing to implement and monitor the following measures.

### OUR VISION



Providing a work environment in which everyone can thrive and is being valued equally



Equal access to leadership positions regardless of gender, ability, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation



A fair recruitment process and career progression based on qualifications without any discriminatory bias



Gender-neutral and transparent salary scales



Removing unconscious biases in research projects



Ensuring a safe and inclusive work environment for everyone

# Inclusive Gender Equality Plan

# MINDS & SPARKS



Area	Employees	Leadership	Policies	Monitoring
Work-life balance and organisational culture	Active mentoring after career breaks or career changes for (re-) integration	Offer support on work-life-balance	Flexible working hours and remote working options to balance work and family life	Continuous assessment of employees' impressions and needs
Gender balance and inclusivity in leadership and decision making	Support and mentoring for female and young employees to enhance competences as well as for advanced employees pursuing new assignments and responsibilities	Regular Inclusive Gender Equality and Diversity training for decision-makers and leaders	Introduction of gender quotas in research teams	Regular collection and monitoring of data regarding gender and diversity distribution
Gender equality and diversity orientation in recruitment and career progression	Equal chances based on skills, regardless of sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, racial or ethnic origin, background, socio-economic status or ability	Open and publicly advertised recruitment and selection procedures in gender-impartial and inclusive language	Introduction of policies to remove (unconscious) gender bias in the recruitment process	Regular collection and monitoring of data regarding gender and diversity distribution
Integration of the gender and diversity dimension into research and training content	Anti-discrimination training sessions for employees in order to diminish unconscious biases in research projects, including but not limited to gender, ability, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation	Review of all projects regarding the consideration of the gender and diversity dimension	Development of company-wide guidelines on how to deal with the gender and diversity dimension in research projects	Assessment of all projects and project proposals regarding the integration of a gender and diversity dimension and maintenance of equal opportunities
Measures against discrimination and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment	Regular discrimination awareness training for employees	Reporting channels for any case of gender-based violence, harassment or discriminatory incidents	Zero-tolerance policy regarding discrimination or sexual harassment	Regular assessment of the perceived work culture and potential problems

## Work-life balance and organisational culture

### Active mentoring after career breaks or career changes for (re-)integration

Active offers for peer-mentoring minimise fears of not keeping pace after maternal or parental leave, long absences due to sickness, care obligations or educational leave. Coaching support is furthermore offered to new as well as established employees seeking career changes and pursuing new responsibilities in other fields of work within the organisation. This ensures equal-opportunities for all employees while fostering work-life balances and support various models of living. Mentoring activities are consolidated through adequate time resource attribution and encouraged by crediting the mentor with coaching experiences acknowledged by the executive leadership.

#### Executive Leadership, Senior Management, Senior Research Staff

- Constant offer and regular advancement of peer-mentoring possibilities
- Yearly evaluation of mentoring records

### Flexible working hours, remote working options to balance work & family life

Increasing availability to work from home and making use of flexible working hours. Possibility of part-time or home office after parental leave, to allow employees an easier transition at the end of the parental leave and return to work.

#### Executive Leadership, Senior Management

- Assessment and provision of equipment needed to work remotely (additional monitors, ergonomic chairs, etc.)

### Offer support on work-life-balance

Creation of general awareness regarding the scheduling of meetings and work-appointments, taking into consideration the flexible work schedule in place so employees with young children, other dependents or liabilities are able to deal with commuting, care or other obligations. This goes along with the managements' responsiveness to changed living circumstances of employees (parental or educational leave, changes regarding the place of residence) or social challenges (e.g. COVID-19).

#### Executive Leadership, Senior Management

- Offer of regular evaluation and feedback opportunities

### Continuous assessment of employees' impressions and needs

Regular assessment of individual requirements and expectations of all employee. Collaborative and individual discussions and on impressions and needs in consideration of work flow assessments, efficiency and satisfaction trends and the overall work environment within the organisation.

#### Executive Leadership, Senior Management

- Yearly needs analysis (questionnaire) with gender-segregated data summaries

## Gender balance and inclusivity in leadership and decision making

### Support and mentoring for female and young employees to enhance competences as well as for advanced employees pursuing new assignments and responsibilities

Creation of a mentorship program, where senior staff guides junior staff through their professional journeys as well as establishment of adequate gender balance thresholds for research teams, whenever possible. Appointment of a Gender Equality & Diversity Advocate backed by dedicated resources.

#### Executive Leadership, Senior Management

- Established mentoring programme
- Appointed Gender Equality & Diversity Advocate

### Introduction of gender quotas in research teams

Establishment of adequate gender balance thresholds for research teams, whenever possible. This not only applies to the composition of teams working on research projects within the organisation, but particularly to the composition of research and development teams or consortia set up in European or international projects and thereby emphasises the organisation's motivation to shape the overall research environment, making it more inclusive with equal opportunities for all, regardless of their sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, racial or ethnic origin, background, socio-economic status or ability.

#### Executive Leadership, Senior Management

- Share of all genders among employed researchers (broken down by scientific field, academic position, part-time or full-time position)

### Regular Inclusive Gender Equality & Diversity training for decision-makers and leaders

Active promotion of and participation in trainings on gender equality, diversity and inclusiveness. This includes workshops or info events on the analysis of national legislation and existing practices in other research institutions and universities in Europe as well as trainings on intersectionality as gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability and other identity categories are not mutually exclusive nor detached from each other .

#### Executive Leadership, Senior Staff

- Dedicated resources for training and competence building

### Regular collection and monitoring of data regarding gender and diversity distribution

Systematic collection of gender-segregated statistics and data on indicators of career paths. Development of an automatic monitoring system for gender equality indicators. Gender- and diversity-sensitive analysis of existing promotion practices. Monitoring of any salary/benefits disparity that might persist among minorities, including the gender salary gap.

#### Gender Equality & Diversity Advocate, Executive Leadership, Senior Management

- Yearly statistics report prepared and presented internally

## Gender equality and diversity orientation in recruitment and career progression

### Equal chances based on skills, regardless of sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, racial or ethnic origin, background, socio-economic status or ability

Ensuring the criteria for the appointment of all positions at M&S is transparent and clear, including top management ones, to foster diversity and ample access to leadership positions. Keep track of national and international networks for female researchers and encourage female employees to take part in these networks.

#### Executive Leadership, Senior Management

- Yearly presentation of promotion criteria and advancement opportunities (based on transparent fixed salary scheme)

### Introduction of policies to remove (unconscious) gender bias in the recruitment process

Introduction of policies ensuring that various life models are considered without limiting opportunities for any employee. This founds on the awareness that any management policy can have a direct or indirect effect on facilitating the flexibility and support required at critical career times (e.g. maternity or paternity leave) and includes the commitment that parental leave does not bear negative consequences for the parent as to career progression. Ensuring transparency and making information available regarding the policies of career and salary progression. Promotion of training and capacity building offers on anti-discrimination, inclusivity and equal opportunities topics.

#### Executive Leadership, Senior Management

- Regular evaluations of inclusivity of the policies in place
- Constant promotion of training offers combating (unconscious) biases

### Open and publicly advertised recruitment and selection procedures in gender-impartial and inclusive language

Use inclusive, unbiased, gender-neutral language in all job advertisements and state commitment to building a diverse and inclusive culture. Composition of interview settings as inclusive and gender-balanced as possible.

#### Executive Leadership, Senior Management

- Share of all genders among applicants
- Share of all genders participating in recruitment processes

### Regular collection & monitoring of data regarding gender and diversity distribution

Systematic collection of gender-segregated statistics and data on indicators of career paths. Development of an automatic monitoring system for gender equality indicators. Gender- and diversity-sensitive analysis of existing promotion practices. Monitoring of any salary/benefits disparity that might persist among minorities, including the gender salary gap.

#### Gender Equality & Diversity Advocate, Executive Leadership, Senior Management

- Yearly statistics report prepared and presented internally



## Integration of the gender and diversity dimension into research and training content

### Anti-discrimination training sessions for employees in order to diminish unconscious biases in research projects, including but not limited to gender, ability, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation

Promotion of debates, workshops and events about current topics within gender equality, anti-discrimination as well as on unconscious bias with the aim of raising awareness to the notion that, decisions are often conditioned based on preconceived ideas. This includes the importance of inclusive language and how to ensure inclusive language is employed in everyday communications, such as operated social media and other dissemination channels or internal communications.

#### Gender Equality & Diversity Advocate, Executive Leadership, Senior Management

- Regular training offers
- Yearly evaluation of the acceptance of offers

### Development of company-wide guidelines on how to deal with the gender and diversity dimension in research projects

M&S is committed to incorporating the principles of gender main-streaming throughout the various elements of research, ensuring equal consideration to the different life patterns, needs and interests of researchers as well as research participants of all genders, sexual orientations, ages, racial or ethnic origins, backgrounds, socio-economic statuses or abilities. This inclusive approach is vital in the context of embedding a comprehensive gender and diversity perspective at every stage of its research processes, ensuring systematic consideration of these elements in all research and analysis activities and achieved through elaborate and state of the art inputs considered in research proposals and projects.

#### Senior Management, Senior Research Staff, Gender Equality & Diversity Advocate

- State of the art Gender and Diversity Consideration guidelines for research proposals and projects

### Review all projects regarding the consideration of the gender & diversity dimension

Provision of support and counsel for researchers on how to integrate the gender and diversity dimension in research by establishing best practices and advising options. This goes along with the compilation of meaningful insights gained from collaborations with other research organisations.

#### Senior Management, Senior Research Staff, Gender Equality & Diversity Advocate

- Regular update of templates and best practice examples according to evaluations and lessons learned

### Assessment of all projects and project proposals regarding the integration of a gender and diversity dimension and maintenance of equal opportunities

Surveillance of advancements of call for tenders' requirements regarding the inclusion of elaborate diversity and gender equality stipulations in research and development project proposals and projects in order to enhance the organisations guidelines and stay up-to-date. Assessment of ongoing research projects and their coherence with enhanced inclusivity recommendations. Monitoring and promotion of diverse and equal gender representation and visibility in panels or events organised by M&S and in which M&S participates.

#### Senior Management, Senior Research Staff, Gender Equality & Diversity Advocate

- Regular evaluation and update of templates and best practice examples according to lessons learned and insights gained from collaborations with other research organisations

## Measures against discrimination and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

### Regular discrimination awareness training for employees

Promotion of debates, workshops and events about current topics within gender equality, anti-discrimination as well as on unconscious bias with the aim of raising awareness to the notion that, decisions are often conditioned based on preconceived ideas. This includes the importance of inclusive language and how to ensure inclusive language is employed in everyday communications, such as operated social media and other dissemination channels or internal communications.

**Gender Equality & Diversity Advocate, Executive Leadership, Senior Management**

- Regular training offers
- Yearly evaluation of the acceptance of offers

### Zero-tolerance policy regarding discrimination or sexual harassment

Setting clear standards and imposing punishment for any infraction of the anti-discriminatory, inclusive and violence-free work environment M&S provides for its employees. This policy includes all violent acts (physical, verbal or psychological) and addresses any kind of discrimination, including but not limited to discrimination on the basis of sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, racial or ethnic origin, background, socio-economic status, ability and other grounds on which discrimination could take place.

**Executive Leadership, Senior Management**

- Zero-tolerance policy formulation and distribution among employees

### Reporting channels for any case of gender-based violence, harassment or discriminatory incidents

Informing all employees of the procedures to be taken for reporting acts of moral and/or sexual harassment and the support system within the organisation they can rely on. This not only includes potential incidents within the organisation, but also those suffered by staff from third parties. Referring victims of sexual and/or moral harassment to healthcare services (e.g., psychologists, doctors) and/or legal professionals, if necessary.

**Executive Leadership, Senior Management, Gender Equality & Diversity Advocate**

- Formulation and distribution of clear, low-threshold guidelines and support measures in case of discriminatory incidents
- Appointment of trusted persons
- Definition of confidential communication opportunities

### Regular assessment of the perceived work culture and potential problems

Implementation of assessment procedure including regular feedback meetings and permanent communication structures that encourage employees to voice concerns and perceptions of the work environment.

**Executive Leadership, Senior Management, Gender Equality & Diversity Advocate**

- Regular feedback and evaluation meetings with employees



The present Inclusive Gender Equality & Diversity Plan is in line with the EC's [Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#), as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The Inclusive Gender Equality Plan aims to contribute to gender equality, diversity and inclusivity in the workplace and ensure better research and development within MINDS & SPARKS through promoting equality between employees of all genders, sexual orientations,

ages, racial or ethnic origins, backgrounds, socio-economic statuses or abilities and challenging stereotypes. It has been set up to establish a workplace culture where all employees are valued, recognised and empowered, and are presented with equal opportunities. By putting the principles into practice, individual differences can be valued and leveraged, leading to more effective collaboration and diverse work. MINDS & SPARKS is not only committed to advancing gender equality, diversity and inclusivity in its own work place, but also to implementing it in its research and development work by developing strategies to include the gender and diversity dimension in all work carried out.

Regardless of their sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, racial or ethnic origin, background, socio-economic status or ability, all employees should be able to access and enjoy the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities. To this end, MINDS & SPARKS has dedicated resources and senior staff to ensure the successful and continuous implementation of all gender equality and inclusivity policies defined in this plan. This includes the following:

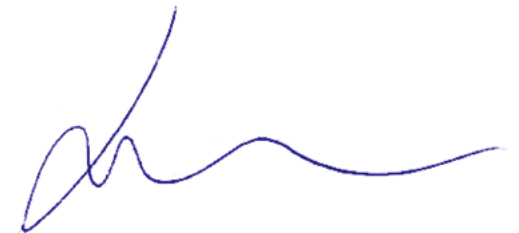
- Consistent and active participation by all staff
- Translation of policy into action initiated by senior management
- Continuous assessment of needs and impressions of all employees
- Clear definition, communication and application of the defined measures to all employees
- Removal of barriers to the full and equal participation in the workforce
- Consistent monitoring of the effective application of the Inclusive Gender Equality Plan
- Application of the policy to all work throughout the organisation



MINDS & SPARKS is implementing the defined measures to ultimately ensure an equal and safe workplace for all employees, regardless of their sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, racial or ethnic origin, background, socio-economic status or ability.

MINDS & SPARKS

MINDS & SPARKS GmbH

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Dr. Peter Leitner', written over a horizontal line.

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