

INSTITUTE OF VERTEBRATE BIOLOGY
CZECH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

2027–2030

Equal opportunities, career development and an inclusive research workplace



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

1. Purpose, continuity and governance

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) outlines the equal opportunities and workplace culture strategy of the Institute of Vertebrate Biology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (IVB) for the period 2027–2030. It follows directly on the IVB Gender Equality Plan 2023–2026 and is designed to preserve continuity while moving from the establishment of individual measures towards systematic development, monitoring and evaluation of their impact.

The plan remains closely linked to the Institute's Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R/HR Award) and to the requirements applicable to research organizations participating in Horizon Europe and national research funding schemes. The 2023–2026 IVB GEP already covered the four mandatory process requirements and all five recommended thematic areas. The 2027–2030 plan therefore focuses on consolidation, measurable outcomes and areas identified by employees as priorities for further development.

Core implementation principles

- Publication and formal approval: the GEP will be published on the IVB website and formally approved by the Institute management.
- Dedicated resources: implementation will be supported by designated staff capacity and institutional financial resources.
- Data collection and monitoring: gender-disaggregated HR data and selected career indicators will be monitored regularly.
- Training and awareness: targeted training and information activities will continue, with emphasis on practical relevance and measurable participation.
- Evidence-based revision: implementation will be reviewed using HR data, employee feedback and repeated People & Culture surveys.

Governance and monitoring

The plan was developed by Mgr. Alena Fornůšková, Ph.D. (R2 researcher, Scientific Secretary, and Head of Popularization and Media Communication) and approved by the Institute Board (internal members only) and the Institute's ombudspersons. Implementation will be coordinated by the HR Award/GEP working group in cooperation with Institute management and relevant administrative units. Progress will undergo a formal mid-term review in 2029 and a final evaluation in 2030 as part of the preparation of the next GEP. Individual activities will be monitored according to the timelines and indicators specified in this Plan.

2. Evidence base for the 2027–2030 GEP

The new plan is based on three main sources: (i) implementation experience from the 2023–2026 GEP and related HRS4R activities, (ii) the 2026 People & Culture at IVB employee survey, and (iii) external recommendations for high-quality and sustainable Gender Equality Plans.

The 2026 People & Culture survey was distributed across the Institute in June 2026 and received 42 responses. The respondent group was gender-balanced (22 women, 18 men, one respondent identifying otherwise and one preferring not to state gender) and was dominated by scientific staff. The survey provides a useful evidence base for institutional priorities; however, interpretation must take account of the lower representation of administrative, technical and operational staff.

Participation by non-scientific/support staff was limited: only 8 of 42 respondents (19%) identified as professional or administrative and technical staff (THP staff), and no respondents identified as manual or operational staff. This is important for interpretation of the survey and will be addressed in the next survey

cycle through targeted communication and engagement of THP and other non-scientific staff. Based on the August 2026 staffing structure, professional, administrative/technical, manual and operational categories together account for 44 of 128 (34%) employees; the next survey should therefore aim for substantially broader participation from these groups.

Open responses from professional and THP respondents provide useful qualitative signals. Respondents particularly value flexible working arrangements, a friendly and supportive atmosphere and helpful colleagues. Areas for improvement include remuneration, organizational information, recognition and respectful treatment of support staff, employee benefits and clearer rules for flexible work and home office. Broader participation will be needed before drawing stronger conclusions for the non-scientific sector.

The HR register records 128 employees (70 women and 58 men), corresponding to 99.83 FTE (53.55 women and 46.28 men). Women represent 54.7% of headcount and 53.6% of FTE. Among senior research scientists, women represent 3 of 17 employees (17.6%) and 3.00 of 14.95 FTE (20.1%). In contrast, women account for 10 of 14 doctoral researchers (71.4%) and 4 of 6 research assistants (66.7%). These cross-sectional differences identify a priority for monitoring career progression and access to senior roles; they do not, on their own, demonstrate discrimination or establish the causes of the imbalance.

Category	Total	Women	Men	FTE	Women FTE	Men FTE
Doctoral researcher R1	14	10	4	6.30	4.05	2.25
Postdoctoral researcher R2	15	6	9	13.05	6.30	6.75
Research assistant R2	6	4	2	4.50	3.00	1.50
Research scientist R3	24	8	16	21.45	7.80	13.65
Senior research scientist R4	17	3	14	14.95	3.00	11.95
R&D specialist	8	4	4	5.73	4.05	1.68
Professional staff – university education	4	2	2	3.10	1.30	1.80
Professional staff – secondary/higher vocational education	24	19	5	16.85	11.85	5.00
Administrative and technical staff (THP)	12	12	0	10.65	10.45	0.20
Manual worker	2	0	2	1.50	0	1.50
Operational staff	2	2	0	1.75	1.75	0
Institute total	128	70	58	99.83	53.55	46.28

Source: HR staffing table, 31 August 2026. Headcount and FTE are distinct measures.

Gender pay comparison by staff category

Pay data as at 31 August 2026 show that differences in average monthly base salary per FTE vary across staff categories rather than following a uniform institute-wide pattern. The largest unadjusted differences occur among senior research scientists and professional staff with university education, where the category averages are materially affected by the representation of top-management positions. Excluding the three top leaders from the senior-researcher comparison substantially narrows the difference; excluding the

Head of Administration likewise reduces the difference in the professional staff category. The administrative and technical staff comparison should be interpreted with particular caution because men account for only 0.20 FTE in this category. Categories represented by only one gender are not shown. These descriptive figures do not in themselves demonstrate unequal pay for equal work, as they do not control for seniority, responsibilities, experience, performance or other legitimate pay determinants. They will serve as a baseline for more detailed monitoring that protects employee confidentiality.

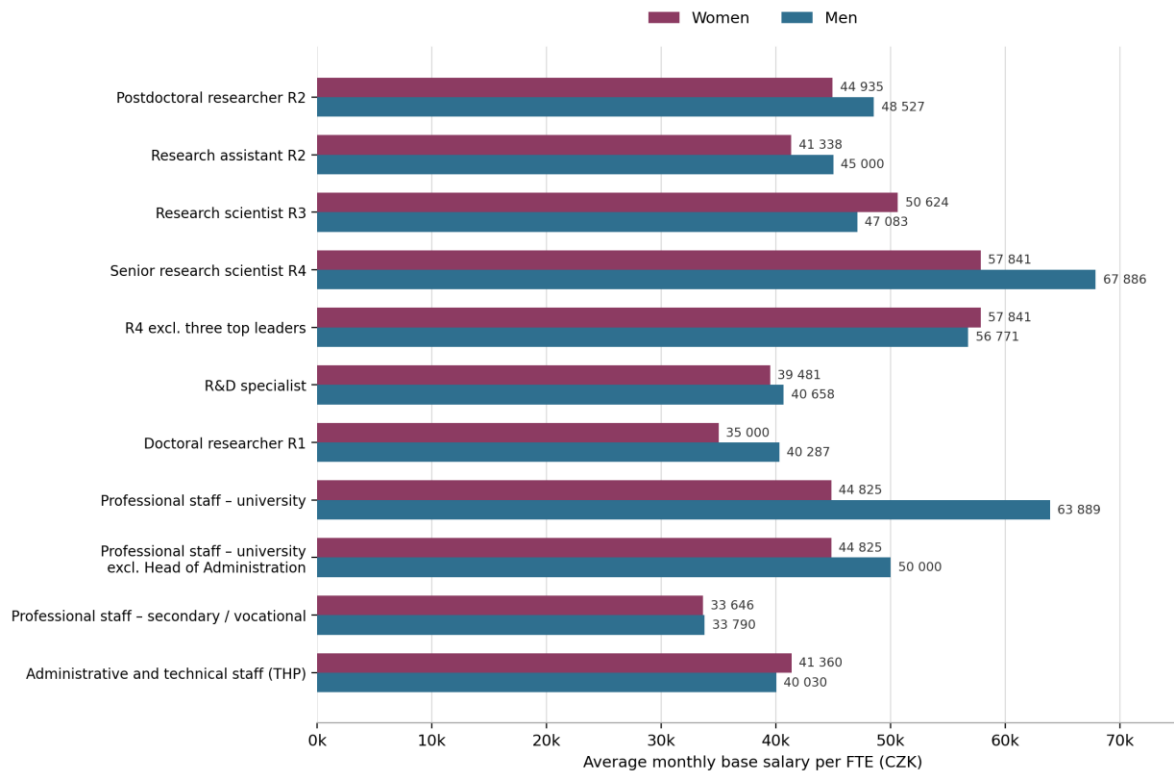


Figure 1. Average monthly base salary per FTE by staff category and gender, excluding bonuses, as at 31 August 2026. Adjusted rows show comparisons excluding selected top-management positions that materially affect the category average. Categories represented by only one gender are omitted. Source: IVB payroll data.

Key findings from the 2026 People & Culture survey

- Work-life balance is a clear institutional strength. Flexible working arrangements and home office are among the most widely used and most valued measures.
- Employees generally report a positive sense of safety and respect at IVB and high awareness of the IVB ombudspersons.
- Career development is the strongest area for further improvement: employees request clearer career pathways, better information, mentoring and leadership development.
- Among R1–R3 researchers, interest in future leadership roles is substantial, while lack of experience, time, opportunities and mentoring are reported as important barriers.
- Internal communication, transparency and access to information about support mechanisms remain recurring themes in open responses.
- Awareness of the existence of whistleblowing mechanisms is higher than practical knowledge of how to use them; accessibility and communication should therefore be strengthened.
- Employees value collegiality, autonomy, flexibility and supportive interpersonal relations; the new GEP should protect these strengths while addressing identified gaps.
- Single-source employee information. During 2027–2030, IVB will consolidate practical employee information into one bilingual CZ/EN Staff Handbook available on the intranet. Rather than creating multiple separate brochures, the Handbook will serve as the primary orientation point and will include

onboarding information, key contacts, support and reporting mechanisms, career-development information, relevant policies and practical checklists. The Handbook will be reviewed and updated at least annually.

3. Work-life balance and organisational culture

IVB will continue to treat flexible working arrangements, supportive management and a collegial working environment as core elements of an inclusive workplace. The 2026 survey confirms that flexible working hours and home office are among the most important measures supporting work-life balance. The priority for 2027–2030 is therefore to maintain these strengths, ensure that access is transparent and compatible with the nature of individual jobs, and strengthen support during career breaks and returns to work. During 2027–2030, IVB will support employee wellbeing and sense of belonging through a combination of flexible working arrangements, community-building activities, inclusive internal communication, accessible information and supportive management.

Action	2026 baseline / rationale	Target / indicator	Responsibility	Timeline
3.1 Maintain flexible working arrangements and home-office options where compatible with job requirements.	100% of respondents (42/42) identified flexible working hours and 81% (34/42) home-office options as measures contributing to their work-life balance.	Maintain flexible working arrangements and home-office options where compatible with job requirements. Reassess their contribution to work-life balance in the 2030 People & Culture survey.	Institute management; HR/THP; team leaders	2027–2030
3.2 Strengthen reintegration support after maternity/parental leave or other significant career breaks.	Open survey responses call for stronger support for return after parental leave and more stable career perspectives. Since 2026, eligible research staff returning from maternity, parental or caregiving career breaks may apply for financial support under Subprogramme E - Support for Returns from Career Breaks of the Academy of the Future Programme, which supports reintegration into research for up to two calendar years.	Reintegration procedure and return-to-work checklist included in the bilingual CZ/EN Staff Handbook; return-to-work discussion offered to relevant employees; eligible research staff informed about available support, including Academy of the Future - Subprogramme E. Use of reintegration support documented where applicable.	HR/THP; team leaders	By Q4/2027; maintained thereafter
3.3 Continue family-oriented and community-building activities according to staff interest and available resources.	The 2026 People & Culture survey confirms interest in community-building activities: 52% of respondents (22/42) would welcome teambuilding activities, while 36% (15/42) selected sports teambuilding and 36% (15/42) family-oriented events.	At least one family-oriented and one community/team-building activity offered annually, subject to staff interest and available resources; participation recorded.	Institute management; HR Award/GEP group	Annual

Action	2026 baseline / rationale	Target / indicator	Responsibility	Timeline
3.4 Strengthen and monitor employee wellbeing and sense of belonging.	In the 2026 People & Culture survey, 67% of respondents (28/42) agreed or strongly agreed that they feel part of the IVB community, while 76% (32/42) agreed or strongly agreed that IVB sufficiently supports employee wellbeing. Participation by non-scientific/support staff was limited, which restricts comparison across staff categories.	Support improvement in employee wellbeing and sense of belonging through the measures implemented under this section, particularly flexible working arrangements, community-building activities, accessible employee support, improved internal communication and transparent access to information. In the repeated People & Culture survey, aim to increase positive responses on sense of belonging from 67% to ≥75% and on employee wellbeing from 76% to ≥80%. Where response numbers allow, results will be compared by staff category.	HR Award/GEP group	2027–2030; outcome evaluated in 2030
3.5 Increase participation of THP and other non-scientific/support staff in institutional People & Culture surveys.	2026 baseline: 8 of 42 respondents (19%) were from professional or THP categories; no manual/operational staff responded. This limits interpretation of needs outside the scientific sector.	Achieve broader participation of professional, THP, manual and operational staff in the next People & Culture survey, aiming for an overall response rate of ≥35% across these categories combined via target communication.	HR Award/GEP group; HR/THP; heads of administrative/support units	2030 survey
3.6 Strengthen inclusive internal communication and access to employee information.	The 2026 People & Culture survey identifies internal communication, transparency and access to practical information as recurring areas for improvement. Open responses particularly call for clearer information on organisational changes, HR-related matters, career-development opportunities and available support mechanisms.	Bilingual CZ/EN Staff Handbook established on the intranet as the primary employee information point by the end of 2027 and reviewed at least annually, with updates as needed. Important organisational and HR-related changes communicated through appropriate internal channels.	Scientific Secretary and HR Manager	By Q4/2027; reviewed annually and updated as needed

4. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

The 2023–2026 GEP addressed gender representation in leadership and decision-making. The 2027–2030 GEP builds on this work by strengthening transparent pathways to leadership. In the 2026 People & Culture survey, 64% of respondents to the leadership-interest question (16/25) would or would rather consider a leadership role, while lack of experience, time, opportunities and mentoring were important barriers.

The August 2026 HR baseline records 17 senior research scientists, of whom 3 are women (17.6%). Women are also underrepresented in several leadership and decision-making bodies: Director and Deputy Director (0 women, 2 men), Institute Board (2 women, 7 men), International Advisory Board (1 woman, 4

men), and Heads of Departments (1 woman, 2 men). Women currently hold the position of Scientific Secretary (1 woman, 0 men) and two of the three Deputy Head of Department positions (2 women, 1 man).

The 2027–2030 GEP will therefore combine leadership development and mentoring with opportunities to gain practical leadership experience, while continuing to monitor gender representation in leadership and decision-making. Particular attention will be paid to R2-R3 researchers and other employees with leadership potential; access to leadership opportunities should be transparent and merit-based.

Action	2026 baseline / rationale	Target / indicator	Responsibility	Timeline
4.1 Provide structured leadership development for current and prospective leaders, with particular attention to R2-R3 researchers and other employees with leadership potential.	In the 2026 People & Culture survey, 64% of respondents to the leadership-interest question (16/25) would or would rather consider a leadership role. Among respondents reporting barriers (n=21), the most frequent were lack of experience (52%; 11/21), lack of time (48%; 10/21), lack of opportunities (43%; 9/21), administrative workload (29%; 6/21) and lack of mentoring (29%; 6/21).	At least one leadership-development activity offered annually, with content adapted to current leaders and/or employees with leadership potential; mentoring opportunities facilitated where feasible. Participation recorded by gender and career stage/role.	Institute Management; HR Award/GEP Group	From 2027, annual
4.2 Facilitate access to early leadership opportunities for R2–R3 researchers and other employees with leadership potential.	The 2026 People & Culture survey indicates a gap between interest in leadership and opportunities to gain relevant experience. Among respondents reporting barriers to taking on a leadership role (n=21), 52% (11/21) identified lack of experience and 43% (9/21) lack of opportunities to take on a leadership role.	Identify and communicate opportunities for R2-R3 researchers and other employees with leadership potential to gain practical leadership experience through coordination, supervision or mentoring, committee/working-group participation, or responsibility for defined institutional tasks. Aim to involve at least three employees annually; participation recorded by gender and career stage.	Institute Management; Heads of Research Groups/Departments; Scientific Secretary	2027–2030, annual
4.3 Monitor gender balance in leadership and decision-making positions.	August 2026 baseline: senior research scientists 3 women/17 (17.6%); Director and Deputy Director 0/2 women; Scientific Secretary 1/1; Institute Board 2/9; International Advisory Board 1/5; Heads of Departments 1/3; Deputy Heads of Departments 2/3.	Gender representation in leadership and decision-making positions reviewed at least once during the GEP implementation period and as part of the preparation of the next GEP. Changes from the 2026 baseline documented and persistent imbalances discussed by Institute Management and/or the Institute Board. No fixed quota is set.	Institute Management; HR Manager; GEP/HR Award Group	2029 mid-term review and 2030 end-of-period evaluation

5. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Open, Transparent and Merit-Based Recruitment (OTM-R) remains the basis of recruitment at IVB. During the previous GEP period, the Institute strengthened attention to inclusive and gender-sensitive communication, including dedicated training. The 2027–2030 plan will retain these standards while shifting additional attention from recruitment towards transparent career progression, professional development and support for early-career researchers.

Action	2026 baseline / rationale	Target / indicator	Responsibility	Timeline
5.1 Maintain OTM-R principles and inclusive, gender-sensitive recruitment communication.	OTM-R and gender-sensitive communication were core actions of the previous GEP; dedicated training was delivered during the period.	Recruitment templates and guidance maintained and periodically reviewed; relevant staff receive refresher information as needed.	Institute management; HR/THP	2027–2030
5.2 Develop transparent and accessible career-development guidance for R1–R4 researchers and relevant professional/support categories.	The 2026 People & Culture survey identifies career development, transparency and access to information as areas for improvement. Among respondents to the R1-R3 career-information question, 57% (12/21) agreed or strongly agreed that they were sufficiently informed about career-development opportunities and support mechanisms.	Develop career-development guidance describing career stages and expectations, progression principles, development options and available support where applicable. Consolidate information on mentoring, mobility, training, new research group establishment and relevant contacts in the bilingual CZ/EN Staff Handbook and intranet.	Institute management; Scientific Secretary; HR/THP	Key existing information from 2027; framework/guidance by Q4/2028
5.3 Introduce or formalise regular career-development discussions.	The 2026 survey identifies a need for clearer career-development information and support, particularly among early- and mid-career researchers.	Develop guidance for structured career-development discussions and pilot it with selected teams/career stages; evaluate feasibility before wider implementation.	Team leaders; HR/THP	Pilot in 2028; review in 2029
5.4 Monitor career progression and departures by gender and career stage.	August 2026 provides a cross-sectional staffing baseline by gender and career category; systematic trend data on progression and departures are not yet consolidated as a GEP indicator.	Review gender-disaggregated recruitment, career progression and departures at the 2029 mid-term review and 2030 end-of-period evaluation, where data quality and numbers allow meaningful interpretation.	HR/THP; Institute management	2029 and 2030

6. Integration of the sex and gender dimension into research

The previous GEP introduced awareness of the gender dimension in research. For a biological research institute, the 2027–2030 plan will use the broader and more practical concept of the sex and gender dimension in research. In many IVB projects, biological sex may be scientifically relevant to study design, sampling, analysis or interpretation, while social gender may be relevant only in specific contexts. The objective is not to require a sex/gender dimension in every project, but to ensure that researchers can identify and justify its relevance or non-relevance.

Action	2026 baseline / rationale	Target / indicator	Responsibility	Timeline
6.1 Integrate practical consideration of the sex/gender dimension into relevant research and grant-development support.	The previous GEP introduced awareness of the gender dimension in research; practical, discipline-relevant guidance is now needed.	A concise sex/gender-dimension checklist included in the bilingual CZ/EN Staff Handbook by Q4/2027 and used in proposal-development support where relevant.	Scientific Secretary; Project Support	By Q4/2027; applied thereafter where relevant

Action	2026 baseline / rationale	Target / indicator	Responsibility	Timeline
6.2 Provide at least one practical seminar or information session during the plan period.	Need for practical, discipline-relevant rather than generic training.	At least one practical, discipline-relevant seminar or information session delivered during the plan period; participant feedback collected.	Scientific Secretary; invited expert	By 2029

7. Safe working environment and measures against gender-based violence, harassment, discrimination, and other inappropriate conduct

The previous GEP focused on building institutional mechanisms for reporting and resolving workplace problems. By 2026, IVB employees show high awareness of the Institute's ombudspersons and generally positive perceptions of safety and respect. The next phase will therefore focus on accessibility, trust, practical knowledge and coordination of existing mechanisms.

The system includes IVB ombudspersons, the whistleblowing channel and the possibility of contacting the ombudsperson at the Czech Academy of Sciences. The planned establishment of an IVB Ethics Committee will be incorporated into the support architecture once formally approved.

Action	2026 baseline / rationale	Target / indicator	Responsibility	Timeline
7.1 Ensure clear and accessible information on support, safe and confidential reporting mechanisms, including as part of employee onboarding.	In the 2026 People & Culture survey, 95% (40/42) knew that IVB has two ombudspersons, 90% (38/42) knew how to contact them, and 83% (35/42) agreed or strongly agreed that they feel safe and respected at IVB. While 76% (31/41) were aware of the whistleblowing system, only 43% (18/42) knew how to use it.	By Q2/2027, include a clear CZ/EN 'Where to seek help' section and practical flowchart in the Staff Handbook and onboarding process. In the 2030 survey, maintain ombudsperson awareness at >=90%, increase practical knowledge of whistleblowing from 43% to >=75%, and maintain or improve positive perceptions of safety and respect (2026 baseline: 83%).	HR/THP; HR Award/GEP Group; Ombudspersons	By Q2/2027; survey evaluation in 2030
7.2 Provide periodic communication and targeted training on respectful workplace behaviour, discrimination, bullying and harassment.	The previous GEP introduced training; continued awareness remains necessary.	At least one targeted communication or training activity on respectful workplace behaviour, discrimination, bullying and harassment during the GEP period; participation recorded.	Institute management; HR Award/GEP group	By 2029

8. Data, monitoring and accountability

The 2027–2030 GEP will use a defined set of quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess progress and inform future measures. Monitoring will be proportionate to the size of the Institute and the expected pace of change. Where possible, meaningful and legally appropriate, data will be disaggregated by gender and career/staff category. Particular attention will be paid to confidentiality where small numbers could allow individuals to be identified.

The following indicators will be used, as relevant to individual GEP actions:

- headcount and FTE by gender and career/staff category;
- gender representation in leadership and decision-making positions;
- recruitment data, where available and meaningful, including applicants, shortlisted candidates and selected candidates;
- career progression and departures by gender and career/staff category;
- pay indicators by comparable job category and FTE, using a methodology that protects confidentiality;
- participation in mentoring, leadership and career-development activities;
- availability, awareness and, where appropriate, uptake of work-life balance, career-development and employee-support measures;
- employee perceptions of equal opportunities, career development, wellbeing, belonging, safety and respect, assessed through the People & Culture survey.

Monitoring cycle

Ongoing monitoring: Implementation of individual GEP actions will be documented according to the timelines and indicators defined in this Plan. Relevant HR data will continue to be collected as part of routine institutional administration. Activities with annual targets will be recorded annually.

Mid-term review (2029): A proportionate internal review will assess progress in implementing the GEP, identify barriers or actions requiring adjustment, and review selected indicators where meaningful changes can reasonably be assessed.

End-of-period evaluation (2030): Implementation and outcomes of the GEP will be evaluated as part of the preparation of the next GEP. The evaluation will use updated HR data, comparison with the 2026 baselines and a repeated People & Culture survey. Where response numbers allow, survey results will be compared by gender and staff/career category.

Findings from the mid-term and end-of-period evaluations will be discussed by Institute Management and the HR Award/GEP Group and used to adjust measures where necessary and to inform the subsequent GEP.

9. Summary of strategic priorities for 2027–2030

Strategic principle	2027–2030 focus
Maintain	Flexible working arrangements, work–life balance measures, inclusive recruitment standards and established support and reporting mechanisms.
Develop	Transparent career pathways, mentoring, leadership capacity and practical leadership opportunities, support for early-career researchers, and reintegration after career breaks.
Strengthen	Employee wellbeing and sense of belonging, internal communication, transparency and practical accessibility of information and support through a single bilingual CZ/EN Staff Handbook on the intranet, including onboarding information and practical checklists.
Integrate	A practical sex- and gender-dimension check into relevant research and grant-development processes.
Measure	Progress and outcomes through proportionate monitoring, gender-disaggregated HR data, defined indicators and repeated People & Culture surveys.

10. Approval and validity

This Gender Equality Plan was prepared as a continuation of the IVB Gender Equality Plan 2023–2026. Following internal consultation, the final version will be submitted for formal approval no later than 27 September 2026. The plan will enter into force on the date of signature by the Director of the Institute and will remain valid for the period 2027–2030.

Sources used for preparation of this draft

IVB HR staffing table, status as at 31 August 2026 (Stav zaměstnanců – podklady pro GEP).

IVB payroll data, status as at 31 August 2026 (Mzdy pro GEP).

- IVB Gender Equality Plan 2023–2026.
- People & Culture at IVB survey, 2026.
- Donovalová, A., Linková, M., Langhammerová, G. (2024): Plány genderové rovnosti v organizacích veřejného sektoru realizujících výzkumnou činnost – Zpráva pro rok 2024.
- Gender-sensitive communication training materials used at IVB, 6 February 2024.

Note on the use of artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (ChatGPT, OpenAI) was used as a supporting tool in the preparation and revision of this Gender Equality Plan, particularly for language editing, structuring of the document and analysis and presentation of survey data. The final content, objectives, measures and targets were reviewed and approved by the Institute of Vertebrate Biology of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

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