

## 6.5. The ICM's commitment to gender equality in marine research

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Despite the drive towards equality between women and men in research institutions in recent years and the progress that has been made, there is still a long road ahead. Science is still associated with the male image, and women's work and contributions are often invisible. Like many other spheres of society, research institutions contribute to the structural re(production) of gender inequalities.

Women and men each tend to have more presence in certain scientific fields, with the horizontal segregation that this involves. Furthermore, the "glass ceiling" (the invisible barrier that hinders women's access to the highest levels of decision-making or responsibility, limiting their professional careers) causes vertical segregation. Staying in research is an obstacle course in which there is a constant trickle of skills and talents, which is exacerbated for women. Moreover, research often seems blind to the gender dimension in its approach, content and analysis.

Dealing with this situation requires institutional changes at many levels. Nowadays, it is a priority on the agendas of many international organizations. In this sense, the European Commission aims for the gender dimension to be fully integrated into Horizon Europe's research projects, and the European Research Area also establishes as a priority that gender equality and the gender perspective be integrated into research. Likewise, integrate gender equality in the field of marine research is a

requirement set by the UN in the framework of the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

### Gender equality as a guiding principle of the ICM

As a centre of excellence in marine research, the Institut de Ciències del Mar (ICM) is fully aligned with the commitment to gender equality. The people who work at the ICM carry out our work with a concern for knowledge of the marine environment and a holistic vision, and we are prepared for today's challenges. As a result of this pioneering position and creative outlook in the study of the oceans, our institution also has a great responsibility to society. Our commitment as a public-funded research institution is to achieve scientific excellence in the marine field by promoting the values of respect, equality, diversity, transparency, and collaboration (Figure 1).

Since 2017, the ICM has an Equality Task Force, which has become a focus for reflection, debate, training, generation of alliances and actions. Some of its work has been aimed at giving visibility to the work and creativity of female researchers and technicians, providing opportunities for participation, identifying expressions of inequality, and proposing improvement measures, identifying and deploying good practices, and bringing science closer to schools by offering female role models<sup>(1)</sup>.



Figure 1. A sea of diversity. Illustration by Vanessa Donoso

This process took a qualitative leap forward by obtaining funding for two European projects<sup>(2)</sup> aimed at promoting gender equality in innovation and research. As a result of these initiatives, for the first time, the ICM has a Gender Equality Plan<sup>(3)</sup> at the institutional level.

### The ICM's Gender Equality Plan

Before the drafting of the Plan, a diagnosis was carried out to establish the specific situation of women and men regarding equal treatment and opportunities, as well as to identify inequality gaps and the factors that produce them. The diagnosis has led to an awareness of situations of inequality and discrimination based on gender and revealed the possibility of making informed decisions to reverse this situation. The Plan prioritizes objectives and results and defines a set of measures to achieve them in various fields of action, including among others, career development, training in gender equality, organization of working time, co-responsibility and work-life balance, gender equality in the functional and

organizational structures of the center, and the inclusion of gender in research and innovation.

The Plan, which will be implemented over the next two years, includes cross-cutting actions that need to be anchored in institutional policies and positive action measures aimed at correcting identified situations of inequality. It is also a dynamic document that can be adapted to meet new challenges and future contexts. To evaluate the impact of the Plan, a set of indicators is available to verify the achievement of results. The Plan is the institutional roadmap for equality and has been endowed with the necessary resources for its effective implementation.

For the Equality Task Force, the journey so far has been a very enriching process and at the same time a constant challenge. We are convinced that the Plan will be a revulsivet for the ICM. It will undoubtedly have positive effects not only among women, by reducing gaps and eliminating gender biases, but also among all staff, with the improvement of team motivation, the retention (and recruitment) of qualified professionals and a new impulse for corporate social responsibility.

The Plan also presents us with the new challenge of rethinking our marine research by incorporating the gender dimension and intersectionality. It will provide a stimulus that will help the ICM to achieving a more inclusive, diverse and transformative ocean science and to become a benchmark marine research centre for new generations.

(1) The ICM was recognized with a runner-up prize in the Distintivo de Igualdad (Equality Award) of the CSIC in the 2020 call for applications.

(2) LeTSGEPS and RESBIOS are projects funded by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 SwafS programme. LeTSGEPs, Leading Towards Sustainable Gender Equality Plans in research institutions, Grant Agreement n° 873072. RESBIOS, RESponsible research and innovation grounding practices in BIOsciences, Grant Agreement N°872146. We have also actively participated in the SwafS project ACT, Promoting Communities of Practice to advance knowledge, collaborative learning and institutional change on gender equality in the European Research Area, Grant Agreement n° 788204.

(3) <http://bit.ly/GEP-ICM-2021>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20350/digitalCSIC/14112>