

# Protocol for ethical research and data privacy: Advancing Gender Equality in Scientific Organizations project

## 1. Purpose

This protocol sets out the ethical principles and data privacy procedures guiding the Advancing Gender Equality in Scientific Organizations project. It ensures the protection of research participants, compliance with international ethical standards, and responsible management of all data collected.

## 2. Ethical principles

The project adheres to the following principles:

- **Informed consent:** Participation in surveys or interviews is entirely voluntary. Clear, accessible information will be provided to all participants prior to participation, outlining the purpose of the study, how data will be used, and their rights.
- **Right to withdraw:** Participants may withdraw at any time without penalty, and their data will be removed if requested.
- **Non-maleficence:** The project commits to minimizing any potential harm to participants, particularly given the sensitive nature of experiences with discrimination or exclusion.
- **Equity and fairness:** Efforts will be made to ensure equitable representation across geography, discipline, and career stages.

## 3. Data collection

### Quantitative Data

- The survey collects both aggregate institutional data (e.g., total number of members, gender distribution) and contextual data (e.g., policies, initiatives, nomination procedures).
- These data do not constitute personal data under GDPR or most data protection regulations when presented at the institutional level.
- Respondents are informed that institutional data on the proportion of women members may be published in aggregate or attributed to their organization, unless they explicitly opt out in writing. Publishing this data supports learning, benchmarking, and informed action toward gender equality. All findings shared publicly will aim to encourage reflection and improvement, not evaluation or ranking.

### Qualitative Data

Qualitative data will be collected through two channels:

1. **Voluntary individual written forms**, in which participants can share personal experiences, insights, and reflections related to gender equality in scientific organizations. These forms are fully optional

and may be submitted anonymously or with identifying information, depending on participant preference. All responses will be securely stored and anonymized before analysis.

2. **Semi-structured interviews**, conducted by trained members of the project team or designated partner organizations. These interviews aim to explore more in-depth perspectives on barriers, enablers, and institutional cultures related to women's representation and leadership.

For both data collection methods:

- Participation is **voluntary**, and participants will be asked to provide **informed consent**.
- Interview recordings will be made **only with explicit consent**.
- All data will be **securely stored** in encrypted, access-controlled environments.
- Transcripts and written responses will be **fully anonymized** to remove any personal identifiers.
- Anonymized qualitative data will be analyzed to identify common themes, challenges, and good practices.
- Any quotes used in reports will be selected and edited, if necessary, to ensure participants cannot be identified, even indirectly.

#### 4. Informed consent

All participants will receive:

- Plain-language information detailing the project scope, how data will be used, confidentiality protections, and their rights;
- A digital consent form confirming understanding and agreement.

#### 5. Data privacy and security

- All **personal data** (e.g., interviewee names or contact details) will be fully anonymized. No individual participants will be identifiable in any publications or project outputs.
- **Institutional data** collected through the survey will be presented in aggregated form, with one exception: the percentage of women at the organizational level may be published and attributed to the respective organization- unless anonymity is explicitly requested in writing. Sharing this specific indicator promotes transparency, accountability, and collective learning within the scientific community. It also enables benchmarking and supports informed action toward advancing gender equality.

#### 6. Ethical oversight

An Expert Panel will provide independent oversight to ensure that all ethical standards are upheld throughout the project lifecycle. Ethical concerns arising during the project will be promptly addressed by the Taskforce in consultation with the Expert Panel.



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## 7. Data retention and archiving

Quantitative and qualitative data collected for the project **will be archived securely by partner institutions** to support:

- Replication or verification of findings;
- Longitudinal comparisons with future studies.

**Personally identifiable information (PII)**, such as raw interview recordings or direct quotes, will be:

- Anonymized before analysis and publication;
- Retained only as long as necessary for analysis and validation;
- Securely deleted or archived in restricted-access repositories after the project ends, according to ISC/IAP/SCGES policy and applicable data protection regulations.

## 8. Compliance

This protocol aligns with:

- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR);
- The ethical frameworks of ISC, IAP, SCGES, and relevant international research guidelines.