

SWERVE Gender Equality Plan

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Introduction

Gender equality is important as it reflects the diversity of society, help attract and retain the best talent and ensure innovation (EMB, 2024). Whilst gender equality has been a concern and area of focus in Europe and globally since the 1990's, females are still under-represented in science and technology careers, and the field of marine science is no exception (Giakoumi et al., 2021).

In 2021, the European Marine Board (EMB) created the first EMB Gender and Diversity Plan and has since updated it with a 2024 version. These documents provide a foundation for the Swedish Research Vessel Infrastructure for Marine Research (SWERVE), to help understand areas of concern within the marine science community, what is being done to rectify these, and importantly, whether there are complementary actions that SWERVE can take in our operations, which support the broader efforts of the marine community.

Whilst gender is the primary focus of the SWERVE Equality Plan, we acknowledge that gender is only one component of diversity, equity and inclusion. There are a multitude of diversity measures, such as those outlined in the EMB report, however it may often be difficult and ethically questionable to gather the appropriate data to monitor progress towards specific targets. This plan will therefore focus on monitoring *gender* equality within SWERVE operations, whilst striving for an equal approach to all diversity measures where possible.

This plan outlines the steps that will be taken, and decisions made, to achieve gender equality within the operations of the infrastructure. It will influence the work across all three infrastructure work modules. Areas of focus include, but are not limited to, recruitment, governance participation, access to and engagement with SWERVE infrastructure, and involvement in SWERVE activities such as workshops. This plan will ensure that the operations of the SWERVE infrastructure adhere to the Swedish Research Council's policy for gender equality (*Policy för jämställdhetsintegrering*) by ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender, or other key aspects of human identity, will have equal access to SWERVE infrastructure and other opportunities.

Gender Equality in SWERVE Operations

In development of this plan, it is important to understand where SWERVE has direct control over gender equality and balance, where SWERVE can play an advocacy role but not directly control the balance, and where the responsibility sits with SWERVE for ensuring all infrastructure provide equitable and safe working environments with respect to gender and diversity.

Governance and Management

SWERVE has direct control over the gender balance in the SWERVE Secretariat, Steering Committee, and Scientific Review Panel. In this instance, SWERVE aims to achieve equal representation of women and men. At the same time, it is equally important that SWERVE

identifies and works with the best candidates for the role in question, irrespective of gender. In recruitment, SWERVE is committed to a transparent and structured recruitment process for all roles, including administrative staff, steering committee members, and scientific reviewers. The gender balance of these committees is measured, reported, and a target of 50:50 is sought.

The Ship Operators Network (SON) and the SWERVE Partner Consortium are two aspects of SWERVE governance where membership is not defined by SWERVE. The SON membership is determined by the recruitment strategy of the organisations operating the vessels; and the SWERVE Consortium membership is determined by the SWERVE Partner organisations. In both these cases, SWERVE can communicate the importance of gender considerations in membership of these committees.

SWERVE Infrastructure users

SWERVE has two main user groups, researchers and technicians. SWERVE will take targeted actions to promote gender equality within these groups, both with respect to membership and infrastructure access/involvement.

Researchers

Marine researchers are the main user group of SWERVE services and infrastructure. We have a mailing list as well as research applicants for ship time. There is a documented imbalance in the marine academic world, particularly linked to career level: a close-to-balanced ratio at the undergraduate and PhD level, and a marked decrease in females through the progression to professorships and management positions (Giakoumi et al., 2021). This discrepancy is out of the direct control of SWERVE but does impact the balance that we can expect in our engagement with this user group. Gender balance in the mailing list membership is outside of SWERVE direct control, however if a significant discrepancy is noted within the SWERVE communication network, actions will be taken to ensure our communication methods are appropriate, and to investigate whether there are other underlying reasons for the imbalance that SWERVE could address and contribute to correcting. Gender balance of access to the infrastructure (i.e. ship time) is within our control, and whilst scientific excellence will remain our dominant criteria for allocating access, gender will be considered where motivated to meet gender equality objectives.

Technicians

Of the two user groups in SWERVE, the technicians are likely to have the highest degree of gender *imbalance*. Careers that involve extended and regular periods at sea are traditionally male-dominated roles, and many of the technicians and research engineers involved in the SWERVE National Marine Technicians Network (NMTN) will have sea-going positions. We therefore expect a predominance of males in this network. Additionally, whilst the membership of the network is open to all Swedish marine technicians/research engineers, the gender balance of the network is fully determined by the recruitment strategy of the organisations who employ the technicians. Therefore, gender balance of the NMTN mailing list is outside of direct SWERVE control. However, if a significant discrepancy is found within the NMTN and engagement with SWERVE opportunities, SWERVE will directly encourage and facilitate female involvement by allocating resources to promote a more equal gender balance in workshops and activities of the NMTN (i.e. full travel funding for females, or first-access to workshops for females). Additionally, any imbalance that is detected will be communicated to the organisations who hire marine technicians, with the intention to a) make them aware of the

national trend, b) encourage them to address this when recruiting, c) invite them to directly encourage any female technicians to engage more in SWERVE. After review of the gender equality of the NMTN over the duration of the current funding period for SWERVE, if no improvement is found then tailored workshops or at-sea opportunities for female technicians will be incorporated into the next funding cycle for SWERVE.

SWERVE Gender Equity Plan

General Gender Equality Objectives

SWERVE has the following general objectives with respect to gender equality in our operations. These will be monitored by the SWERVE secretariat and overseen by the Steering Committee.

Communication: SWERVE will utilise its communication channels to advocate for gender balance and to directly invite the involvement of female researchers and/or technicians for events and opportunities if an imbalance in engagement is recognised. All communication material will be developed in a way that promotes an integrated gender perspective in text and pictures, i.e. the external picture of SWERVE is gender neutral and does not reinforce gender stereotypes of researchers, technicians, or others. Additionally, SWERVE will ensure very clear communication actions for implementation of a zero-tolerance to gender- or other diversity-based discrimination and harassment.

Recruitment/Involvement: Direct actions will be taken to attain balanced gender across the SWERVE-funded secretariat staff, and the voluntary committee positions with the Steering Committee and Review Panel.

Access: SWERVE will ensure no gender biases in the allocation of access to the SWERVE infrastructure, however if we see a significant imbalance in the gender of those being recommended for infrastructure access, gender aspects will be considered as an additional criterion (as outlined in Table 1). We will continuously monitor and report on the gender dimension and possible biases in the recommendations.

Opportunities: SWERVE will ensure that all opportunities (workshops, training, events) are communicated broadly and without bias. Where an imbalance in engagement is noted, we will investigate the reasons for this and act to rectify it.

Gender KPIs

To support achieving the gender objectives, SWERVE will track and measure the gender balance within the infrastructure by collecting gender metrics, as outlined in the SWERVE Key Performance Indicators. The KPIs that are relevant to this Gender Equality Plan are listed below.

KPI 1: Annual infrastructure users – research

This KPI focuses on ship-time proposals and gathering information based on the following numbers:

- Number of applications from female, male and unspecific gender PIs.
- Number of successful applications from female, male and unspecific gender PIs.

KPI 2: Annual infrastructure users – technicians career development.

This KPI focuses on participations across genders and gathering information based on the following numbers:

Total number of female, male and unspecific gender using opportunistic berths for work experience.

Total number of female, male and unspecific gender technicians/trainees undertaking at-sea workshops or training.

Total number of females, males and unspecific gender undertaking at sea workshops or training.

KPI 4: Networks, training and communication – Outputs/outcomes

This KPI is measuring two different things, gender balance amongst the network participants and governance.

Priority Actions

Objective	Actions	Metrics
Communication and information	<p>Raise awareness about gender equality and inclusion issues and influence within SWERVE through communication and information efforts.</p> <p>Share the Gender Equity Plan with the partner organizations and on the website</p> <p>Keeping information regarding the infrastructure inclusive and promote membership from both genders.</p> <p>In SWERVEs communication efforts, the infrastructure will depict both male and female scientists and technicians in pictures. Both on the website and within presentation materials.</p>	<p>KPI 4</p> <p>Save all communication material to evaluate the gender representation within the material.</p> <p>Use the website metrics to keep track of communication efforts.</p> <p>Evaluate every year how the gender representation within communication and information efforts have been.</p>
Recruitment / involvement	<p>Aim to achieve equal representation of men and women in SWERVE secretariat staff, Review Panel and Steering Committee. Track gender balance in all SWERVE networks and identify imbalances.</p> <p>Investigate potential reasons for any identified imbalances and act to rectify them. Depending on the area, actions will differ. The main one still being to recruit and involve a balanced group in reference to gender.</p> <p>Share the equality plan amongst the governance of SWERVE. Set aside time during Steering Group meeting to regularly reflect on the gender equality plan and whether it still reflects operations or needs updating.</p>	<p>KPI 4</p> <p>Keep track of the gender balance within the different groups.</p>
Access	<p>Ensure ship-time application process is equitable in terms of access to all genders. In the case of equal scientific strength, the underrepresented gender will be prioritized.</p> <p>Ensure that the Review Panel and Ship Operators Network utilize the criteria's when assessing applications to prevent gender bias. These criteria are consistent across all applications and focus solely on scientific merit, ensuring a fair evaluation process.</p> <p>Provide information to researchers ahead of voyages regarding zero-tolerance to gender – or other diversity-based discrimination and harassment.</p> <p>Vessel specific actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that all vessels have a discrimination action plan. - Ensure that all vessels have a chain of command and 	<p>KPI 1</p> <p>Track gender balance within access to the infrastructure and identify imbalances.</p>

	communication plan in case of gender discrimination and/or harassment.	
Opportunities	<p>Ensure all SWERVE opportunities are equitable in terms of access to all genders. To achieve this SWERVE will allocate resources to promote a more equal gender balance in workshops and activates.</p> <p>Track gender balance within the infrastructure and connected networks and identify imbalances and the reason behind these. If there is a chance to create a better balance, take action.</p> <p>The activities will be determined to create a positive and inclusive environment and focus outcomes of the activities.</p> <p>Communicate to SWERVE organisations regarding the national trend, encourage them to address this when recruiting and invite them to directly encourage any female technicians to engage more in SWERVE.</p>	KPI 2 and KPI 4

References

European Marine Board. (2024). Gender and Diversity Equity and Inclusion Plan. In *European Marine Board* (S. 1–13).

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Giakoumi, S., Pita, C., Coll, M., Frascchetti, S., Gissi, E., Katara, I., Lloret-Lloret, E., Rossi, F., Portman, M., Stelzenmüller, V., & Micheli, F. (2021). Persistent gender bias in marine science and conservation calls for action to achieve equity. *Biological Conservation*, 257, 109134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2021.109134>