



Bio Knowledge Agora: Developing the Science Service for
European Research and Biodiversity Policymaking

Connecting biodiversity knowledge and decision-making

**D6.3 Gender and equality action plan, criteria
for environmental assessment and set of
indicators**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym / Abbreviation	Meaning / Full text
ERSN	External Research and Stakeholder Network
GEP	Gender and Equality Action Plan
The European Charter for Researchers	“The European Charter for Researchers is a set of general principles and requirements which specifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/or funders of researchers. It constitutes a framework for researchers, employers and funders which invites them to act responsibly and as professionals within their working environment, and to recognise each other as such.” For more information, please see: https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter
The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers	“The Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers consists of a set of general principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and/or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers. These principles and requirements are complementary to those outlined in the European Charter for Researchers. Institutions and employers adhering to the Code of Conduct will openly demonstrate their commitment to act in a responsible and respectable way and to provide fair framework conditions to researchers, with a clear intention to contribute to the advancement of the European Research Area.” For more information, please see: https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter
Ombudsperson	Ombudsperson is a person whose role is to investigate mistrust, complaints and conflicts within the project and attempt to resolve them, usually through recommendations or mediation.
Social justice	Commonly considered as a guiding principle to achieve just society, both as a means and the end. It includes e.g., full and equal participation of all individual, and the recognition and support for needs and rights of individuals (Abbott, 2014. In Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_2772).





BACKGROUND: ABOUT THE BIOAGORA PROJECT

BioAgora is a collaborative European project funded by the Horizon Europe programme. It aims to connect research results on biodiversity to the needs of policy making in a targeted dialogue between scientists, other knowledge holders and policy actors.

Its main outcome will be the development of a Science Service for Biodiversity. This new service will fully support the ecological transition required by the European Green Deal and the European Union's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

The BioAgora project was launched in July 2022 for a duration of 5 years. It gathers a Consortium of 22 partners, from 13 European countries, led by SYKE, the Finnish Environment Institute. Partners represent a diversity of actors coming from academia, public authorities, SMEs, and associations.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an initial gender and equality action plan of the BioAgora project. The plan will be developed in an iterative process during the project lifecycle. The plan will be revisited and updated when a need arises. The deliverable also includes the criteria for environmental assessment and set of indicators for evaluation of gender and equality, social learning, and conflict resolution.

Equality and non-discrimination are an essential part of human resources policy and a good working community at all levels of institutions and projects. The objective of gender and equality action plan is to achieve better gender equality in BioAgora project and to what kind of measures and objectives that project partner organizations need to consider when implementing the project plans. The equality plan is based on the Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans.

The action plan for Gender and Equality consists of three entities: adoption of basic rules and procedures of each partner institution of consortium, set of indicators to be developed and monitored throughout the project continuum, and training and awareness raising of the management and all project personnel.

The BioAgora project involves partners from two non-EU countries: Norway and United Kingdom. The activities planned in Norway and the UK do not raise special ethical issues. All the activities planned to be performed in Norway and UK, as well as in partners based in EU Member States are in line with EU regulations as well as national legislation. The detailed plan for implementing a gender policy is described below.





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1. Gender and equality action plan

1.1. Overall goal of the action plan

Equality and non-discrimination are an essential part of human resources policy and a good working community at all levels of institutions and projects. The objective of gender and equality action plan is to achieve better gender equality in BioAgora project and what kind of measures and objectives that project partner organizations need to consider when implementing the project plans. The equality plan is based on the Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (GEPs, <https://www.amires.eu/horizon-europe-guidance-on-gender-equality-plans-geps/>), and specific values and rules for carrying out the action listed on the grant agreement between European Commission and BioAgora consortium.

As a project, BioAgora aims to be a good working community for everyone. No one is discriminated against based on gender, origin, religion, sexual orientation, or any other reason. The realization of equality in the project is everyone's business. Project employees and stakeholders are our most important asset, and we want that to be reflected in our activities and everyday work. To build a sustainable society, we need different people, viewpoints, and skills. Only in this way can we produce research and professional results and services from insightful perspectives.

Gender & Equality Action Plan (GEP) of BioAgora project has used example from the EU Horizon 2020 funded project Baltic Gender Project (No 710363). The action plan follows the recommendations developed in the project and the following elements are considered in all operating, reporting and dissemination phases of the project:

- Gender diversity among the project team
- Gender balance in governance body and decision-making
- Equal opportunities of researchers at different stage (young vs. professors) to participate
- Work-life balance of the participants
- Social justice issues in the research content
- Communication and stakeholder engagement to promote gender and equality issues

The action plan for Gender and Equality consists of three entities: adoption of basic rules and procedures of each partner institution of consortium, set of indicators to be developed and monitored throughout the project continuum, and awareness raising of the management and all project personnel.

The BioAgora project involves partners from two non-EU countries: Norway and United Kingdom. The activities planned in Norway and the UK do not raise special ethical issues. All the activities planned to be performed in Norway and UK, as well as in partners based in EU Member States are in line with EU regulations as well as national legislation. The detailed plan for implementing a gender policy is described below.

This is an initial gender and equality action plan of the BioAgora project. The plan will be developed in an iterative process during the project lifecycle. The plan will be revisited and updated when a need arises.





1.2. Adoption of basic rules and procedures

In general, the BioAgora consortium needs to follow the Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (GEPs, <https://www.amires.eu/horizon-europe-guidance-on-gender-equality-plans-geps/>), and specific values and rules for carrying out the action listed on the grant agreement between European Commission and BioAgora consortium. The consortium must pay particular attention to the principle of proportionality, the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to the physical and mental integrity of persons, the right to non-discrimination, the need to ensure protection of the environment and high levels of human health protection.

The members of the consortium will take all measures to implement the principles set out in the Commission Recommendation on the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, regarding the working conditions, transparent recruitment processes and career development. To make sure that the gender and equality dimension, and social justice on the broader context (see definition below) is taken into account in the project content-wise, the relevance of these subjects are broadly discussed in each WPs. The Project Coordinator makes sure that the consortium members and all researchers working in the project implement the Action Plan in their work. Also, the processes and monitoring results will be shared with the management and all personnel of the project.

Gender and socially fair mainstreaming

In BioAgora, the project team will be managed in a fair and transparent way. The Coordinator and Project Manager will always be available to discuss and help solve any problems that may occur in the project's workflow or within the consortium. Younger members of the team are encouraged to participate in challenging tasks, and their contribution will be fully acknowledged. All members of the consortium are encouraged to avoid gendered language in the project communication and give positive and constructive, correcting feedback in order to reach the highest possible performance. Partner institutes are encouraged to commit to gender-neutral recruitment processes, determine the salaries and set similar terms of employment of the project team based on merit and responsibility, without the influence of gender. Questions addressing gender and other equality issues will be integrated as a part of project internal reporting in every six months. The set of indicators for evaluation of gender and equality, as well as social learning and conflict resolution, has been developed, they will be monitored and checked regularly as part of the WP 6.1 processes and action plan, goals, processes, and results will be shared with the management and personnel of the project.

Gender and academic career balance in the project

The BioAgora project strives to ensure balanced gender representation at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including at supervisory and managerial level. Gender balance will be considered throughout the project in the compositions of the project's internal governance bodies, such as Project Steering Committee and Consortium Assembly. Gender balance among BioAgora researchers will be considered by evaluating the gender distribution represented by the consortium partners, work package, and task levels. Attention will also be paid to the equal representation among the Work Package and Task leaders. In addition, when selecting representatives to different activities, such as external working groups, gender and academic career diversity will be considered. Same principles will be applied when nominating members to BioAgora's external boards and groups, such as External Advisory Board (EAB).

In addition, special attention will be paid to the gender diversity and respecting diversity of gender (female, male, non-binary, etc.). BioAgora is following guidelines of safe spaces in all BioAgora related events. Equal opportunities of researchers in different career state to participate in scientific publishing are supported. BioAgora aims to enforce fair allocation of decision-making and scientific authorship based on contribution.





- gender balance in project coordination (governance bodies, WP and Task leaders)
- gender balance in external boards and groups
- gender balance in expert groups
- gender balance in cascade funding evaluation panels

Work-life balance of the participants

In BioAgora, work-life of the project researchers is considered important. The consortium partners are encouraged to allow employees to choose part-time contracts and have flexible working hours and possibilities for telecommuting. It is also relevant to ensure that the workload of all positions is such that it can be carried out during the agreed work time (office hours). Gender equality is taken into account in recruitment and career progression. In regard to the parental leaves, male employees are encouraged to take the leave available to them. Any person that may take care leave, whether women or men, to look after children or people with special needs, will be considered as co-author of any work in which may have participated throughout the project, independent of whether the person has not been able to fully participate in all the steps of the process.

Social justice in the research content

BioAgora consortium is highly led by females. We are running several activities and the project will closely collaborate with other EU funded projects, research institutions and other stakeholders. BioAgora will build a process of engagement and capacity building to enable participation of diverse types of actors and stakeholders from e.g., research and other institutions. The BioAgora researchers will engage and collaborate individuals in different way. Interviews, surveys, and workshops will be hosted by the project across the work packages and throughout the project. Participants will be targeted based on their professional experience and relevance to the project and recruited to participate via the consortium's existing networks as well as other means, such as invitations to participate in relevant newsletters. Participants are clearly informed that participation is completely voluntary and that they can withdraw at any stage. They are also informed about the aims of the activities, methods used, implications of the results, storage, and accessibility of the data.

Gender, ethnicity, and other socio-demographic sensitive i.e., *social justice* aspects are also considered in this stakeholder engagement. In meetings and workshops to be organized, an adequate gender balance will be maintained in the invited speakers and chairs. In workshops and meetings, information of unacceptable behavior will be collected by online feedback tools.

Communication and stakeholder engagement

The partner institutions of BioAgora must ensure that researchers and all participants involved in the action are aware of equality and non-discrimination plans and guidance. The project participants will be provided with information on this action plan and means how to act in case an infringement occurs. It will be ensured that all the participants have access to the plan by placing it in the project's shared online workspace (Microsoft Teams).





2. Criteria for environmental assessment and set of indicators

BioAgora project has developed a set of indicators for project evaluation, on environmental impact, quality, impact, engagement, gender & equality, social learning and conflict resolution. WP6 will organize regular quality checks as part of the 6.1 structures and use empowering project team self-evaluations to ensure adaptive character of the project. In addition, the established External Advisory Board will offer external support the BioAgora Coordination Team and Steering Committee with critical and innovative considerations. Secondly, the working group of External Research and Stakeholder Network is responsible to develop and implement engagement with third parties and reference groups and assess the engagement impact on a yearly basis.

Environmental impact	• Share (%) of train trips of all journeys made by BioAgora partners to meetings
Engaging with technical stakeholders	• Number of academic organisations engaging in the ERSN • Number of civil society organisations joining the ERSN • Number of private companies joining the ERSN • Number of public authorities/policymakers joining the ERSN • Number of joint actions with other EU projects and initiatives • Number of collaborations with International science & policy platforms • Number of BioAgora-led activities with active engagement of stakeholders
Public engagement and citizen-science to develop shared values for transformative change of SP(S)Is	• Number of representatives of citizen groups (incl. different social groups from young to old and across different cultural and geographical context) engaged in BioAgora SPI activities • Number of national-level public fora organised • Number of participants in the EU-wide public forum • Number of policy-makers participating in the EU-level policy workshop • Number of demonstration cases where public engagement or a citizen science element has been implemented.
Science-policy interfacing	• Number of fast requests addressed • Number of regular requests addressed • Number of active Participations by BioAgora in policy related activities • Number of Citations of BioAgora in scientific articles • Number of Citations of BioAgora in policy related publications • Number of Citations of BioAgora in media • Science Service running • Number of decision taken / policies adopted by decision- / policy-makers on the basis of BioAgora Demonstration Cases
Capacity-building	• Number of policy-makers participating in BioAgora summer schools and mentoring programmes for decision-makers • Number of researchers participating in BioAgora summer schools and mentoring programmes for researchers • Number of freely accessible online courses/webinars • Number of people receiving a certificate in BioAgora training sessions • Number of capacity building needs addressed by BioAgora • Improvements in actionable knowledge reported by course participant • Improvements in skills and capacities reported by course participants.





Fostering diffusion of knowledge and Open Science and optimising data use	• Number of scientific events/conferences in which BioAgora is presented • Number of scientific publications about BioAgora • Number of publicly available data sets • Number of BioAgora participants engaging in exchange programmes (fellowships, visiting scientists, ...) in the framework of BioAgora • Number of Science cafés organised at national level to bridge across science, policy and society
Outreach to the various target audience groups, including the general public	• Number of non-scientific events/conferences in which BioAgora is presented • Progression of the number of followers on social media • Number of newsletters' readers • Number of articles about BioAgora in general media
Ensuring gender equality	• Share (%) of by gender type among BioAgora governing bodies • Share (%) of women and men recruited for the project • Share (%) of women and men among BioAgora researchers • Share (%) of women and men among authors on scientific publications resulting from BioAgora • Progression of the number of partners having a GEP • Existence of the BioAgora GEP • One training on the Gender equality aspect delivered during one CAM
Ensuring fair and socially justice research	• Events and other activities are open to all • Documents are developed in understandable format to avoid academic terminology • Gender and social diversity are considered in surveys/interviews/workshops • Share (%) of by academic position among BioAgora governing bodies • Share (%) of different socio-economic groups in interviews/workshops/events
Optimising quality management	• Setting-up of a Coordination Team and Steering Committee • Setting-up of an External Advisory Board • Timeliness in deliverables and milestones submission • Timeliness in reporting (internal and to EC) • Timeliness/% in member response to requests by the various BioAgora bodies • Timeliness/% in BioAgora bodies' response to requests by their members • Existence of a Management Handbook
Conflict resolution	• Existence and satisfactory application of a Code of Conduct • Availability/ accessibility/ responsiveness of an Ombudsperson
Transformative potential of the demonstration cases	• Policy processes are influenced by Science Service • Ways policy processes work change to include more different knowledge producers

