



# IARC EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is dedicated to ensuring equity, diversity, and inclusion, and one of its ethical principles, as stated in the document “Ethical Principles and Conduct of IARC/WHO Staff: Compilation of policies and practices, May 2017”<sup>1</sup> is “*respect for the diversity, dignity, worth and equality of all persons.*”

The IARC/WHO Values Charter, adopted in 2019, clearly refers to empathy, humanity, and respect for diversity and is in resonance with the WHO Values Charter, which places an emphasis on commitment to diversity, respect, and fair treatment:

*Our Values, our DNA*

*WHO, as the directing and coordinating authority on international health within the United Nations system, adheres to the UN values of integrity, professionalism and respect for diversity.*

Moreover, IARC, as part of the larger United Nations (UN) family, adheres to the principles of equality and non-discrimination as part of the foundations of the UN Rule of Law,<sup>2</sup> as well as to the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) Standard of Conduct for UN personnel, who “*shall fully respect the human rights, dignity and worth of all persons and shall act with understanding, tolerance, sensitivity and respect for diversity and without discrimination of any kind*”.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.2 Why diversity is important for IARC

IARC knows that diversity is what makes the Agency stronger, more innovative, and more creative. IARC personnel are diverse in terms of geographical origin, with more than 50 nationalities represented.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the Agency should pay appropriate attention to equality, diversity, and inclusion to ensure fair representation of all groups (of diverse gender identity,

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<sup>1</sup> [http://intra.iarc.fr/Documents/How%20To/EthicalFramework/IARC\\_Policy\\_EthicalPrinciples-StaffConduct.pdf](http://intra.iarc.fr/Documents/How%20To/EthicalFramework/IARC_Policy_EthicalPrinciples-StaffConduct.pdf). Section 1.2.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/human-rights/equality-and-non-discrimination/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://icsc.un.org/Resources/General/Publications/standardsE.pdf?r=02594303>

<sup>4</sup> IARC Medium-Term Strategy for 2021–2025, page 43.

[https://events.iarc.who.int/event/29/attachments/67/154/GC63\\_6A\\_MTS\\_2021-2025.pdf](https://events.iarc.who.int/event/29/attachments/67/154/GC63_6A_MTS_2021-2025.pdf)

race, geographical origin, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or age) and a workplace culture that welcomes and benefits from the capabilities and knowledge of its diverse and multicultural workforce. This, in turn, will sustain IARC to remain competitive and innovative, and ensure the social value of its international research.

IARC focuses on its priorities with a view to ensuring that its activities have a significant and sustainable impact on the global burden of cancer and, ultimately, on the life and health of the world's citizens. IARC can achieve this goal by fully adhering to the principles of diversity and inclusion in its policies as well as in its organizational culture, by actively recruiting a diverse workforce at all stages of the career path, and by creating strategic partnerships and outreach activities.

Research has shown that relying on a diverse workforce has multiple benefits, such as offering a variety of different perspectives, increased creativity, greater innovation, faster problem-solving, better decision-making, increased profits, higher employee engagement, reduced employee turnover, better company reputation, and improved hiring results.<sup>5</sup> It goes without saying that these utilitarian arguments for inclusivity are a good starting point – a concept and an established norm in international UN policies – and this affirms the idea that diverse groups across a broad spectrum of society should have a say in processes that affect them.

IARC, through its collaborative research and partnerships, promotes international collaboration in cancer research and recognizes the power of diversity to achieve its objective of identifying the causes of cancer so that preventive measures may be adopted and the burden of disease and associated suffering reduced. IARC has an international and worldwide cancer research mandate. Thus, having a diverse workforce that is open-minded, flexible, open, and tolerant towards any kind of diversity is definitively an added value (for all collaborative research activities).

Many of IARC's collaborating institutions and funders already have gender equality, diversity, and inclusion plans in place, and IARC should lead by example.

## **2. PURPOSE**

In line with the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy<sup>6</sup> and the WHO initiative on Promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion,<sup>7</sup> the purpose of the IARC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy is to lay the foundation for sustainable and transformative progress on equity and

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2019/09/09/the-benefits-of-creating-a-diverse-workforce/?sh=d73ad13140b2>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/assets/documentation/UN\\_Disability\\_Inclusion\\_Strategy\\_english.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/assets/documentation/UN_Disability_Inclusion_Strategy_english.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://intranet.who.int/sites/yow/diversity/>

diversity. This can be achieved by addressing the gaps in relevant policies, if any, and by implementing a concrete action plan that would create a diverse and inclusive culture at all position grades and in all systems and processes at IARC. The ultimate aim is to ensure that IARC demonstrates the highest levels of commitment to equal treatment of every individual or group of individuals regardless of gender identity, race, geographical origin, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or age.

Ultimately, this Strategy will promote equity and diversity through:

- treating all IARC personnel fairly;
- enabling all IARC personnel to develop to their full potential;
- creating an inclusive culture, where all personnel feel a sense of belonging in the workplace;
- ensuring equal access to opportunities for learning and career development;
- ensuring that IARC/WHO policies, procedures, and processes do not result in discrimination;
- equipping personnel to recognize and challenge inequality and discrimination in the workplace; and
- ensuring that procedures are in place to rectify situations where the Strategy has not been implemented.

### **3. SCOPE OF APPLICATION**

This Strategy applies to all IARC personnel: staff members, regardless of the type or duration of appointment, as well as individuals working with IARC on non-staff contracts, such as consultants and holders of Special Service Agreements (SSAs) or Agreements for the Performance of Work (APWs), and including Early Career and Visiting Scientists (ECVSs).

### **4. PRINCIPLES**

#### **4.1 Accountability for diversity, respect, and inclusion**

In accordance with the IARC/WHO Values Charter, all IARC personnel, irrespective of their contract type, position, or grade, are required to adhere to the IARC/WHO core values of diversity and respect. Implementing these values in the Agency's organizational culture is the reflection of a collective effort and responsibility based on the principle of accountability, as further described below.

The IARC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan, which was created in consultation with IARC personnel, stipulates how IARC's equity, diversity, and inclusion will be measured and sets reasonable goals for improvements that have to be made. For that reason,

all IARC personnel, supervisors or managers, and the organization as a whole will be held accountable for change.

#### ***4.1.1 Accountability of IARC personnel***

It is the responsibility of each IARC personnel member to ensure, both in their professional duties and in their corporate functions, such as Staff Association (SAC) or Early Career Scientists Association (ECSA) representatives and members of selection panels or Human Resources Office (HRO)-related committees, that equal treatment is granted to all regardless of age, gender identity, disability, race, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or any other status.

More specifically, the accountability of IARC personnel members towards respect for diversity is reflected in the Performance Management Development System (PMDS), which includes the personnel member's self-assessment and the assessment by the personnel member's supervisors of how well they demonstrated the Mandatory WHO Competency "Respecting and Promoting Individual and Cultural Differences"<sup>8</sup>. Under that competency, the staff member is expected to:

- demonstrate the ability to work constructively with people with different backgrounds and orientations;
- respect differences and ensure that all can contribute;
- relate well to diversity in others and capitalize on such diversity;
- treat all people with dignity and respect;
- relate well to people with different cultures, gender, orientations, backgrounds, and/or positions;
- examine their own behaviour to avoid stereotypical responses; and
- consider issues from the perspective of others and value their diversity.

#### ***4.1.2 Accountability of supervisors or managers***

In addition to demonstrating adherence to the IARC/WHO core values of diversity and respect and to the Mandatory WHO Competency "Respecting and Promoting Individual and Cultural Differences", all personnel members with supervisory or managerial responsibilities must:

- act as role models by maintaining a high standard of personal conduct, treat all colleagues with courtesy and respect, and promote a harmonious work environment that is free from discrimination;
- take appropriate managerial action to address any concerns about personal behaviour of personnel under their supervision that may be seen as discriminatory to others;

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<sup>8</sup> WHO Competencies, page 2. [https://www.who.int/employment/WHO\\_competencies\\_EN.pdf](https://www.who.int/employment/WHO_competencies_EN.pdf)

- ensure that everyone in their teams feels valued and can perform at their best regardless of age, gender identity, disability, race, socioeconomic background, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or any other status;
- ensure that their managerial decisions, such as hiring, reassigning, evaluating performance, and extending contracts, are free from discrimination; and
- meet the diversity targets set by IARC/WHO leadership.

#### ***4.1.3 Accountability of the organization as a whole***

Under the overall leadership of the IARC Director, the Agency is responsible for:

- promoting the values of inclusion and respect for diversity; developing policies, processes, and training courses that support these core values; enhancing diversity in all its facets within the IARC workforce and its systems and processes; and encouraging active engagement with the workforce; and
- developing mechanisms to ensure that a non-discriminatory attitude is adopted by IARC and IARC personnel in their dealings with all persons in every work capacity, at IARC and with collaborators.

## **5. STEPS TAKEN AT IARC TOWARDS GENDER BALANCE, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION**

In September 2017, the UN Secretary-General launched the UN System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity. At the heart of the strategy is the need to increase the recruitment and advancement of women – in particular in middle to senior management levels, where the gaps are the greatest. Therefore, in November 2018, IARC created the Women in Science Advisory Group (WiSA). One year later, it was decided to expand the scope of the group to cover equity and diversity in general, and hence it was renamed as the IARC Equity and Diversity Advisory Group (EDAG). The aim of the EDAG, which advises the IARC Director, is to ensure that individuals or groups of individuals within the Agency are not treated less favourably on the basis of gender identity, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or age.

Some of the steps taken at IARC towards gender balance, diversity, and inclusion are the following:

- IARC, as a policy and as an organization under the WHO umbrella, organizes regular training courses for its personnel. These include (but are not limited to):
  - mandatory training for all personnel (including staff members, ECVSs, consultants, and holders of SSAs and APWs) on “The Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)”;
  - mandatory training on “United to Respect: Preventing Sexual Harassment and Other Prohibited Conduct”;

- special training for supervisors and aspiring supervisors on conflict management – the aim of this half-day training programme is to develop conflict resolution, communication, and negotiation skills in order to manage conflicts efficiently; and
- a Research Leadership Training Programme, which partly aims at helping participants adapt their leadership approach within and across diverse teams.
- Also, since 17 February 2022, IARC is part of the UN-wide Clear Check system, in which all interview short-listed candidates, consultants, holders of SSAs and APWs, and ECVSs will be cross-checked against the database for sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). This is to identify and prevent the hiring of identified candidates in the system who have had SEA issues with other UN entities. Although this is a great step forward, it is limited to people who have worked for UN entities previously.
- In addition, the EDAG organized the IARC International Women’s Day Symposium 2019, in which discussions were built on the following four main pillars:
  - 1) attaining a leadership role in science;
  - 2) achieving work–life balance;
  - 3) institutional and systemic challenges and facilitators to equity; and
  - 4) personal barriers and challenges of gender bias.
- On 18 November 2021, the EDAG, in collaboration with the Human Resources Office (HRO) and the Learning and Capacity-Building Branch (LCB), organized IARC’s Implicit Bias Online Workshop with an external presenter. This webinar examined to what extent subtle biases – with respect to sex, age, ethnicity, or other factors – can enter into evaluation decisions and how they can affect career progression or other outcomes.
- On 27 May 2021, the EDAG and the Staff Association (SAC) hosted an online event for LGBTQ+ personnel and friends, which was successful and had good attendance from across the Agency. The attendees considered IARC to have an open, comfortable, and welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ personnel.
- IARC provides gender-disaggregated data by position grade.
- The EDAG has created an IARC Internal Committees Checklist with the aim of raising awareness about equity issues when organizing meetings or when personnel attend conferences. These forms also signal that IARC as an Agency cares about equity and diversity.

## **6. GENERAL MEASURES TO IMPROVE EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION**

In the IARC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan, targets will be set for some of the commitments listed below, to improve the specific diversity dimensions that the Agency

wants to promote on the basis of its demographics. Below is the list of IARC commitments aimed at improving gender balance, diversity, and inclusion.

### ***Workforce development***

- Review the guidelines for flexible working arrangements after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Demonstrate an internal commitment to empowering women. Further discussions should be conducted with personnel on how to support a development path for women who aspire to senior positions. IARC has a Mentorship Working Group, which is currently initiating a Mentoring Programme for IARC personnel.
- Continue encouraging diversity at speaking engagements, both internally and externally.
  - It has been suggested that IARC holds an annual event on 11 February (the International Day of Women and Girls in Science), focused on successful intervention methods used by other institutions to promote equity.
- Continue offering appropriate training courses (media and presentation skills); through the checklist created by the EDAG, IARC will internally make it a point not to accept all-male panels and to encourage collaborators to have a more diverse approach.

### ***Monitoring of equality, diversity, and inclusion***

- Continue gathering and presenting gender-disaggregated data on recruitment of IARC personnel. IARC will continue to aim for gender balance at the Agency between the different grades at the institutional level. However, redressing the imbalance in the male-to-female ratio in the higher-grade positions will take a number of years. In the short term, the aim could be to have parity by employment category (P staff, GS staff, and ECVSs) overall, and the ultimate aim would be to have parity at all position grades. IARC does not discriminate on the basis of gender identity, and vacancy notices will continue to be gender-neutral. The following measures are currently being considered:
  - The removal of name, age, and gender information from application forms is being considered by selection committees, because this would help counter unconscious bias when recruiting new personnel, at least for ECVSs and GS staff positions.
  - Set a realistic target for improving the gender balance, such as 5% or 10% improvement in a year.
  - Prepare a set of graphs showing the gender balance at IARC by grade for past years, to present to the Scientific Council and Governing Council. These are to show improvement over time. IARC also has the ultimate aim of gender parity among the members of its governing bodies. In addition, data on the gender balance of the Scientific Council and Governing Council will be published.
  - The EDAG will compile recruitment data from 2020 onwards.

- IARC has started redressing a previous gender imbalance in the IARC awards by intentionally nominating women and will continue to do so over the next few years to target the 50:50 male-to-female ratio. On 18 February 2022, IARC launched the first annual IARC Women in Cancer Research Award. The objective of this award is to publicly recognize major scientific achievements of scientists who identify as women, and to present a prestigious award to outstanding women in cancer research.
- With its link to WHO, IARC will continuously provide mandatory training to all personnel on “Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority”.
- The EDAG is made up of representatives of the IARC workforce, who dedicate some of their time to perform the EDAG duties. The EDAG will, on a regular basis, critically evaluate procedures, processes, and practices that may lead to improvement in diversity, equality, and inclusion. Where there is a need, the EDAG will make recommendations.

### *Training and dedicated resources on the EDAG*

- IARC will continue, whenever possible, to provide financial resources for some of the EDAG activities, such as training, that aim to reduce implicit and unconscious bias.

## **7. IMPLEMENTATION**

### **7.1 Action plan**

Diversity is multi-faceted, and in implementing this Strategy, the IARC Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan will have a specific focus on improving the following five areas:

- gender equality;
- gender identity and sexual orientation;
- geographical representation;
- persons with disabilities; and
- age and education diversity.

The Action Plan covers the next five years (2022–2026). It will build on actions towards diversity and inclusion that have already been taken, including the current targets to be met, and will provide for new measures, such as the development of new policies and processes, the proactive reporting of demographic data on the IARC workforce for more informed diversity and inclusion decisions, the setting of targets, and the development of awareness campaigns and training.



## **7.2 Monitoring and evaluation**

The EDAG, HRO, and LCB at IARC will be responsible for:

- monitoring the implementation of this Strategy;
- engaging with the stakeholders concerned to discuss their needs, concerns, and proposed solutions and to jointly evaluate the outcomes of the measures taken to improve diversity and inclusion;
- compiling the data necessary to confirm whether the diversity targets are met;
- engaging with appointing personnel representatives on the means and challenges to implement this Strategy;
- contributing to UN system-wide reporting; and
- linking with experts, such as the IARC Ethics Officer, the WHO Ombudsman Office, or the EDAG, for advice or guidance where needed, or just to touch base.

The EDAG will evaluate the implementation of this Strategy three years after the date when it enters into force.

The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan documents will be published on the IARC intranet and Internet websites.

## **8. ENTRY INTO FORCE**

This Strategy has been endorsed by IARC Senior Management and will enter into force on 8 March 2022.