

Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan

January 2022

von KARMAN INSTITUTE
FOR FLUID DYNAMICS

VISION

The Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan of the von Karman Institute for Fluid Dynamics is a document with which the Institute aims to implement actions and projects to reduce gender inequalities and to enhance diversity with regards, for example, to age, culture, physical ability, sexual orientation, multilingualism, etc.

VKI appreciates the importance of an inclusive community that is not only free from discrimination but is also able and willing to do more - in other words, a community perceiving differences as an ethical value and a valuable resource that can yield positive benefits. This policy reinforces our commitment to promote the diversity of our community (staff and students), fostering a culture of respect and providing equality, fairness and inclusion for everyone, no matter his/her background, characteristics or preferences.

VALUES

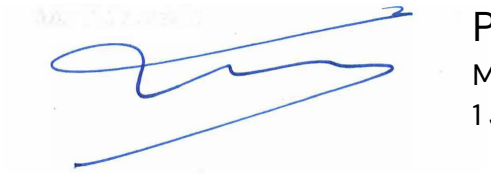
VKI community is committed
-To further build on a fair and inclusive research and educational environment.
-To enhance our positive attitude towards diversity through our institute culture, values and leadership.
-To embrace diversity as an asset for innovation and an enrichment in our multi-skilled research and educational environment.
-To support positive actions in all employment and educational activities and areas (recruitment & selection, learning & development, compensation & benefits, access to facilities, etc.) to provide equal opportunities and a fair treatment for all.
-To be receptive to the needs of those with unique characteristics and combat discrimination
-To value all our employees and students (current, former and future) and to collaborate respectfully by building on each other's difference.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all conduct in the Institute and also to conduct outside of the Institute that is related to the work (e.g. at meetings, social events and social interactions).

The VKI's diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by the board of directors, the managing director, the executive committee, and line managers and has been agreed with employee and student representatives.

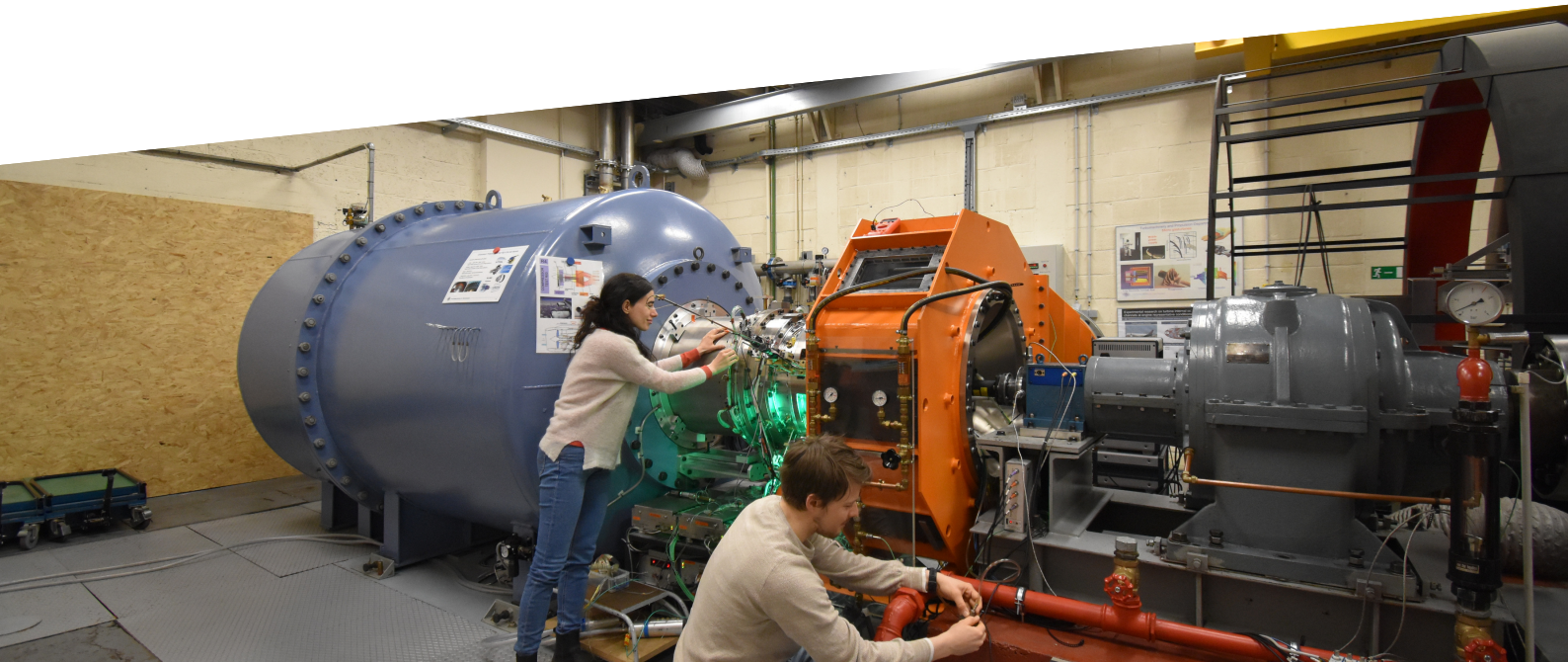
Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action (as stated in the work regulations). Our policy will be monitored and reviewed biannually to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are continually promoted in the workplace.



Peter Grognard
Managing Director
1 January 2022

PUBLICATION

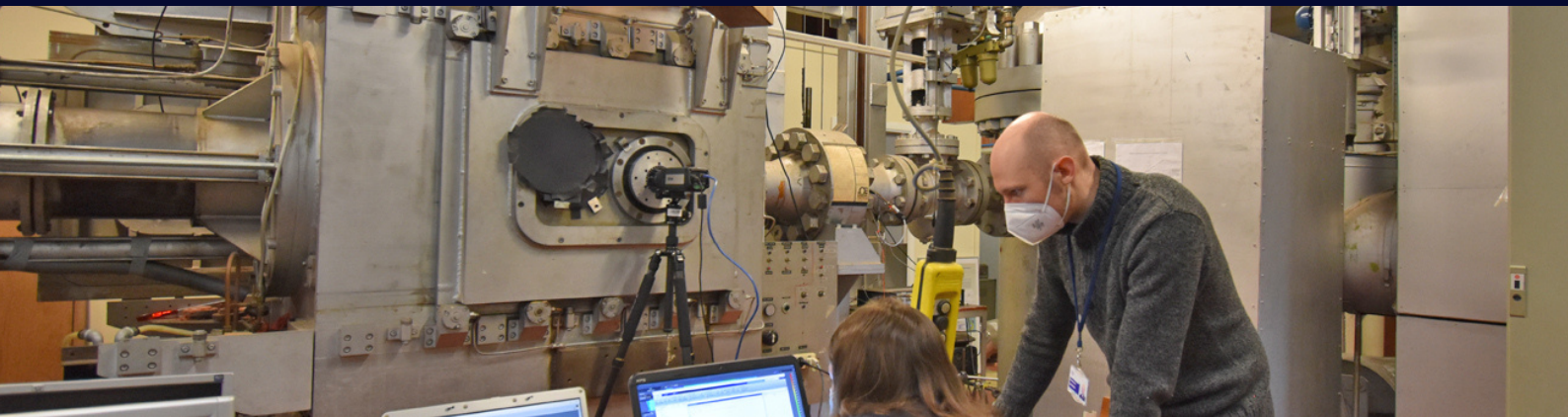
The official diversity and inclusion policy, duly approved by the VKI community, is published on VKI's website:
https://www.vki.ac.be



DEDICATED RESOURCES

VKI has dedicated the following resources and expertise to the implementation of its diversity initiatives and policies to ensure coherence and sustainability:

- Implementation of a Gender and Diversity Working Group which oversees the implementation of the Actions. This group involves researchers, students, executive committee and staff members interested in reflecting and managing actions.
- Appointment of diversity and inclusion officer elected by the Gender and Diversity Working Group. The officer oversees equality, gender and diversity policies. She / he ensures the harmonization, clarification, and fairness of management practices within the institution. She / he develops the institutional policy of equal opportunity at work in partnership with the relevant services. She / he supervises the “Gender and Diversity” working group .This function is occupied by an employee for a percentage of his/her time in addition to the tasks required by her/his function. The officer is invited on a regular basis to the VKI Executive committee to discuss the implementation of the plan.
- Appointment of a gender and diversity representative within the PhD/postdoc community, as well as a representative among the research master students. All are part of the Gender and Diversity Working Group.



DATA COLLECTION

VKI collects annual key figures related to gender-related information, from head count to track representation of women in different job areas to more specific data related either HR (salary wage, parental leaves, job applications), or to research. Data are collected and analyzed on an ongoing basis and are helping to identify the key measures towards more inclusion. They are used to produce official reports.
In parallel, a survey on gender equality, work/life balance, and harassment has been proposed to all personnel and students, with a similar objective to better identify the areas in need to improvement.



ACTION PLAN

VKI ensures mutual respect between genders and is committed to combating stereotypes and all forms of discrimination. As a priority and not exhaustive, VKI supports the following measures as an action plan:





TRAINING AND AWARENESS

VKI raises awareness about unconscious bias, by integrating linguistic forms that respect female identity and includes recommendations to avoid stereotypes:
-training on unconscious bias including debates
-training materials on unconscious bias for all new students and personnel
-training materials available on intranet
-training for all current managers and HR on unconscious bias and best recruitment practices
-Adoption of a gender-fair institutional/administrative language

WORK–LIFE BALANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Further efforts should be made on
- Dissemination of Guidelines concerning the right to disconnect and better planning of meetings and work activities.
- Working time flexibility
- The normalization and recognition of remote work (after covid period)
- Support for family friendliness, especially for international researchers and students
- Adaptation of the evaluation date if too close to a large parental leave
- Helping in work-life balance by a proper information on the parental leave, ….
- Supporting dual career couples at VKI
- Promoting social activities for students and staff children, …

GENDER BALANCE

Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

-Improving the number of women represented in the executive committee

-The new VKI bylaws of 16 December 2021 states that the (Preferred) Stakeholders shall strive to improve the gender diversity among members of the General Assembly and the board of directors. This is not easy to implement when persons are elected, even if balance is required on voting lists. Efforts should be continued to achieve this goal.

-Development of a mentoring system for young researchers and promotion of the beWise mentoring system to all VKI women researchers

-Hosting dedicated sessions and meetings for women: female leadership, assertive writing of proposals and incentive for inclusion.

Gender balance in students' population

-Promote research from women (role models) by participation to seminar and to activities of the ESA educational programme ESERO which targets European students starting from an early age. ESERO uses space related themes and the genuine fascination felt by young people for space to enhance school pupils' literacy and competence in STEM ((Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics))-related subjects.

-Develop material to show science to young children and especially young ladies at VKI open doors.

GENDER BALANCE

Gender balance in recruitment and career progression

-Promote gender balance in selection committees for the recruitment of teaching and technical-administrative staff, researchers. Practically, the creation of a committee dedicated to recruitment will help to shape recruitment procedures within VKI and support the recruitment in various ways to guarantee an open, fair, and transparent selection of our future collaborators

-Follow the EU code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers

-Combat gender stereotypes in assessment and selection procedures through Formation on how to proceed for advertising positions and evaluating applications. These procedures are not visible enough nor widely known and should be extended to all positions. Information provided during advertisement and appointment phases should be more explicit, with pertinent information given on career development.

MEASURES AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE INCLUDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

VKI developed resources for students and researchers on all kinds of harassment. Special attention is paid towards sexual harassment in education (including RM, STP and PhD students). Thrusted persons are available for complaints, mediation and psychological support. This should be extended, and prevention actions planned for researchers, staff and students especially surrounding the question of “consent”. The VKI student regulations will be adapted to include policies about harassment, that will be signed by all students. A proper communication of these regulations together with clear guidelines for such matter will be implemented. In addition, not complying to the policy will be followed by immediate termination.