

Gender Equality Plan

Contents

Part I – STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 4

1. Presentation of the Institution 4

2. Institutional Commitment to Equality 5

3. Characterisation of the ABC CoLAB Team 5

4. General Strategic Objectives 5

Part II – LINES OF ACTION 7

5. Line 1 – Talent Attraction and Selection 7

6. Line 2 – Professional Development and Progression 7

7. Line 3 – Institutional Culture and Inclusive Communication 7

8. Line 4 – Work, Personal and Family Life Balance 8

9. Line 5 – Prevention and Combating of Harassment and Gender-Based Violence 8

Part III – IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING 10

10. Detailed Action Plan (Summary Table) 10

Part IV – FINAL PROVISIONS 18

11. Review and Update of the Plan 18

12. Communication and Clarification Channels 19

13. Bibliographic References 20

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Part I – STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

1. Presentation of the Institution

ABC CoLAB – Ageing Better is a private non-profit association, recognised as a Collaborative Laboratory by the Foundation for Science and Technology in November 2022. It is part of an exclusive triple-helix innovation ecosystem that brings together academia, businesses, government and citizens.

Collaborative Laboratories were created in 2018 with the purpose of strengthening the relationship between scientific output and the economic fabric. There are currently 41 CoLABs in Portugal, four of which are based in the Algarve, including ABC CoLAB, which operates in the field of Health. CoLABs in this area focus on issues with high social impact, promoting applied research and partnerships to address pressing public health challenges – such as the development of drugs for chronic diseases, demographic ageing and health data analysis.

Purpose and Areas of Activity

ABC CoLAB's mission is to study ageing in its multiple dimensions, adopting an integrative perspective and ensuring the transfer of knowledge and technology to society and to markets. Its research and innovation agenda rests on five fundamental pillars: Health and Biomedicine, Social Sciences, Technology, Senior and Health Tourism, and Wellbeing.

The ABC CoLAB team is made up of researchers with multidisciplinary profiles, covering areas such as neuroscience, metabolism, the microbiome, chronic diseases, psychology, occupational health, lifelong learning, bioinformatics, data science, artificial intelligence and tourism. This diversity of skills is intended to drive innovation, generate solutions with real impact and promote the quality of life of ageing populations.

Through the integration of specialised knowledge, ABC CoLAB seeks to develop advanced research, contribute to personalised interventions and foster sustainable approaches in the areas of health, wellbeing and social inclusion in the context of population ageing.

Gender equality is a core value of ABC CoLAB's organisational culture, which is actively committed to building an inclusive, equitable and non-discriminatory work environment. This commitment is reflected in the implementation of a Gender Equality Plan, with concrete measures designed to ensure parity between women and men in all dimensions of the institution's activity.

Structural Challenges and the European Context

Despite the progress achieved, gender equality in the research sector continues to represent a structural challenge. According to the *She Figures 2021* report of the European Commission (European Commission, 2021, p. 154), in 2019 Portugal recorded a percentage of 46% female researchers – a positive figure within the European context. More recent Eurostat data (2024) point to an increase to 51%. However, the under-representation of women in top positions persists: only 24% of leadership positions were held by women (European Commission, 2021, p. 102).

This asymmetry is particularly pronounced at the highest levels of academic and research careers, where only 28% of positions are held by women, according to the same source. This reality calls for the adoption of proactive strategies to ensure equitable access for female talent to opportunities for progression and participation in decision-making bodies.

2. Institutional Commitment to Equality

ABC CoLAB guides its action by international good-practice frameworks on gender equality, as well as by the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination[1] (ENIND 2018-2030). In this context, it adopts a governance model structured around three fundamental pillars:

- **Code of Conduct and Ethics** – aims to promote humanistic and non-discriminatory behaviour across all areas of activity, from research itself to the relationship with society;
- **Gender Equality Working Group** – ensures that the gender dimension is integrated transversally into project design and the definition of internal policies;
- **Continuous Monitoring** – establishes clear indicators that allow the impact of the measures adopted to be assessed, ensuring transparency and accountability in the management of the Plan.

General Objectives of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

Through this GEP, ABC CoLAB aims to achieve, in a comprehensive way, a balance between men and women in leadership positions and in the composition of scientific committees, as well as to promote recruitment processes and calls for applications that incorporate gender-sensitive criteria — measures whose detailed development is presented throughout this document.

3. Characterisation of the ABC CoLAB Team

In 2025, the ABC CoLAB team is made up of fourteen staff members, with the following distribution by academic qualification:

- 12 staff members (60%) hold a PhD;
- 6 staff members (30%) hold a Master's degree;
- 2 staff member (10%) holds a Bachelor's degree.

Regarding the gender composition, there is a female majority: 70% of the team is made up of women, while men represent 30%.

Distribution Indicators

Monitoring of gender equality at ABC CoLAB is based on the following indicators:

Distribution by gender – characterisation of all members who joined in 2025 (including employment contracts and Master's grant holders), broken down between men and women.

Distribution by qualifications and gender – analysis of the team's composition by level of education (Bachelor's, Master's and PhD), broken down by gender.

4. General Strategic Objectives

As part of this Gender Equality Plan, ABC CoLAB has outlined a strategy structured around five priority lines of action, committing to continuously monitor gender equality indicators. This set of measures and initiatives is intended to create the conditions necessary for a professional

environment free of gender stereotypes, promoting fairness, diversity and inclusion at every level of the organisation.

These actions have two main objectives, an internal and an external dimension:

1. **Internal dimension** – aims to support policies that foster the full and equitable participation of men and women in professional activity, as well as career progression for both genders, whether in the research career or in the technical-administrative career.
2. **External dimension** – aims to develop initiatives that contribute to promoting gender equality in the recruitment processes for junior and senior candidates at ABC CoLAB.

Part II – LINES OF ACTION

In this Gender Equality Plan, ABC CoLAB has defined a strategy of action based on 5 lines of intervention:

5. Line 1 – Talent Attraction and Selection

Equitable access to employment opportunities is based on the fair and non-discriminatory treatment of all individuals in the workplace. Recruitment processes must be guided by merit and equal opportunity, excluding any practices that could constitute discrimination on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex, nationality, age or disability.

This line of intervention aims to ensure:

- Gender balance in human resources recruitment processes;
- A balanced representation of men and women in work teams, across the different professional categories;
- Equality in terms of positions and roles at ABC CoLAB;
- Pay equity among staff performing equivalent functions.

6. Line 2 – Professional Development and Progression

Career progression is an essential dimension of staff members' individual and professional growth. The link between performance evaluation and career advancement is a key factor in strengthening staff commitment and increasing organisational productivity.

This line of intervention aims to promote:

- Gender balance in the composition of ABC CoLAB's decision-making bodies;
- Professional development in both research careers and technical-administrative careers.

To this end, transparent procedures will be implemented to ensure equal access to training and development opportunities, thereby creating the conditions for effective career progression for all staff members.

7. Line 3 – Institutional Culture and Inclusive Communication

This line of intervention aims to foster the adoption of inclusive measures within the ABC CoLAB community, as well as to raise awareness among all its members of the importance of gender equality.

ABC CoLAB is committed to incorporating good practices in all its activities and communications, both internal and external, ensuring the use of clear, appropriate and inclusive language in all contexts.

At the same time, the institution will implement a responsible marketing and communication policy, guided by the same principles of equity and non-discrimination, ensuring that external communication reflects the equality values it upholds internally.

8. Line 4 – Work, Personal and Family Life Balance

This line of intervention aims to promote a healthy work environment that enables staff members to effectively balance their professional activity, personal life and family responsibilities.

ABC CoLAB will adopt a set of concrete measures designed to facilitate this balance, without compromising the professional performance or psychological wellbeing of its human resources. The main initiatives planned include:

- **Sharing good practices** – sharing guidance on effective time management and planning of daily tasks;
- **Equitable participation** – encouraging the balanced sharing of family responsibilities between men and women;
- **Workplace flexibility** – implementing flexible working-hours policies and adaptable work arrangements, including, whenever applicable, the possibility of remote working.

9. Line 5 – Prevention and Combating of Harassment and Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence and harassment are realities present in many workplace settings, affecting a significant number of workers. Such conduct can take various forms — from acts directed at someone because of their gender to practices that disproportionately affect people of a particular gender. Its scope is broad, ranging from subtle expressions of hostility to physical or sexual aggression, with serious consequences for the physical and psychological health, as well as the professional wellbeing, of those affected.

To prevent and combat these situations, ABC CoLAB will implement the following measures:

- **Reporting channels** – creation of safe and confidential mechanisms for reporting inappropriate conduct, namely psychological harassment, discrimination, abuse of authority and other unethical practices;
- **Compliance with the Code of Ethical Conduct** – ensuring that all staff members, regardless of their position in the hierarchy, comply with the principles set out in ABC CoLAB's Code of Ethical Conduct.

ABC CoLAB recognises that gender inequalities do not occur in isolation but rather intersect with other dimensions of human identity and experience. In this sense, it commits to adopting an intersectional approach that takes into account how gender intersects with other factors such as ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation or disability.

This perspective aims to ensure that the equality measures implemented benefit everyone, without exception, promoting genuine inclusion and equity within the ABC CoLAB community.

Part III – IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

10. Detailed Action Plan (Summary Table)

Line 1 – Talent Attraction and Selection

Objective	Measure/Activity	Target Group	Indicators	Responsible
Improvement of HR recruitment and selection processes	Ensure that ABC CoLAB follows recruitment, selection and hiring guidelines based on merit and non-discriminatory factors	ABC CoLAB staff and researchers	Distribution by gender of candidates and hired staff % of men/women recruited by area	ABC CoLAB Board Human Resources Department
	Achieve a balance between men and women in the composition of work teams, including in management positions		% of women/men serving on the ABC CoLAB board and ABC CoLAB units Number of men/women candidates for senior positions	ABC CoLAB Board Human Resources Department ABC CoLAB Board Human Resources Department
	Create inclusive job descriptions and include a direct link to the Gender Equality Plan in calls for recruitment proposals	ABC CoLAB community	Distribution by gender of candidates and hired staff.	Human Resources Department Communication and Marketing Department
	Create gender-neutral job postings, or ones that avoid specifying any gender in the description, to be inclusive in our	ABC CoLAB community	Create job advertisements using gender-neutral language	Human Resources Department Communication and Marketing Department

	recruitment processes and to comply with current legislation (Article 24 of the Labour Code)			
Ensure equal pay for equal functions	Apply best practices to ensure fair pay for all workers, regardless of gender	ABC CoLAB workers	For the same category and the same educational qualification, base pay should be the same Annual satisfaction survey	ABC CoLAB Board Human Resources Department Finance Department

Line 2 – Professional Development and Progression

Objective	Measure/Activity	Target Group	Indicators	Responsible
Create performance evaluation mechanisms	Implement appropriate evaluation processes for all staff categories, in order to assess and improve worker performance and achieve organisational objectives	ABC CoLAB workers	Overall performance evaluation result Result obtained by category	ABC CoLAB Board CSO / CIO Human Resources Department
	Ensure balanced gender representation on high-level committees with equivalent responsibilities and in decision-making positions	ABC CoLAB Board ABC CoLAB workers	% by gender within the decision-making body	ABC CoLAB Board

Line 3 – Institutional Culture and Inclusive Communication

Objective	Measure/Activity	Target Group	Indicators	Responsible
Promote a Culture of Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination within the organisational structure	Formalise the Equality Working Group Disseminate the Action Plan to society at large	ABC CoLAB community	Establishment of the working group and making it public through the dissemination of the Gender Equality Plan	ABC CoLAB Board Gender Equality Working Group Human Resources Department Communication and Marketing Department
Gender bias in communications	Use tools such as Gender Decoder (https://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/) to analyse texts and ensure neutral language	ABC CoLAB community	% of communications using neutral language	CSO / CIO Communication and Marketing Department
Raise awareness within the ABC CoLAB community of the importance of gender equality	Make the Gender Equality Plan public on the ABC CoLAB website and in internal communications with the team	ABC CoLAB workers, associates and the ABC CoLAB community in general	Keep the document up to date and published across the various platforms (website)	Communication and Marketing Department Human Resources Department
	Publicly reference gender equality in our research, for example in sample selection, citing the Gender Equality Plan in order to make it visible to the scientific community, whenever doing so does not compromise the aim of the study	Scientific Community ABC CoLAB community	Make reference, in most of our publications, to the care taken regarding gender equality.	ABC CoLAB Team CSO / CIO Principal Investigator
	Participation in projects and initiatives of external organisations for gender equality in research, training and healthcare	ABC CoLAB community	Number of initiatives in which we participate % of male and female participants	Gender Equality Working Group Communication and Marketing Department
	Workshop on equitable practices in research, training and healthcare workplaces	ABC CoLAB workers ABC CoLAB community	Number of seminars and assessment of their impact % of male and female participants	Communication and Marketing Department Human Resources Department ABC CoLAB Team

	Inclusion of gender analysis in scientific projects developed at ABC CoLAB (where applicable)	ABC CoLAB researchers	% of publications that take this assessment into account	Principal Investigator ABC CoLAB researchers CSO / CIO Gender Equality Working Group
Gender Balance in Panels and Events ("No Manel Policy")	ABC CoLAB commits to neither organising nor taking part in scientific panels, conferences or round tables made up exclusively of a single gender (so-called "manels"). A diversity of voices is considered essential to the excellence of the innovation produced	ABC CoLAB workers	% of panels, conferences or round tables (organised by or involving the participation of ABC CoLAB) featuring at least one person of each gender	Communication and Marketing Department Gender Equality Working Group

Line 4 – Work, Personal and Family Life Balance

Objective	Measure/Activity	Target Group	Indicators	Responsible
Promote a balance between personal and professional life	Availability of flexible working hours, including the possibility of hybrid working	ABC CoLAB workers	Annual ABC CoLAB satisfaction survey % of men and women who benefited from this work arrangement	ABC CoLAB Board Human Resources Department
	Foster a good working environment by creating monthly sharing moments between the different team members	ABC CoLAB workers	Annual ABC CoLAB satisfaction survey	Human Resources Department Communication & Marketing Department
	Share with the team measures to encourage work–family life balance, such as planning daily activities by priority, promoting mental health, and encouraging employer support for workers' participation in family life	ABC CoLAB workers	Internal communication across the various platforms – e-mail, Teams – raising awareness of these topics. Posts on ABC CoLAB's social media to this effect as well	Communication & Marketing Department Human Resources Department Gender Equality Working Group
	Support workers regarding their existing rights to parental leave and coverage, breastfeeding time and support leave	ABC CoLAB workers	Annual ABC CoLAB satisfaction survey	Human Resources Department
Promote a balance between personal and professional life	Support for Return after Parental Leave: implement an action plan to support workers returning from extended parental leave	ABC CoLAB workers	Annual ABC CoLAB satisfaction survey No. of reintegration meetings to update on projects. Flexible scheduling during the first three months after return. % of men and women who benefited from this support measure	ABC CoLAB Board CSO / CIO Human Resources Department
	Continue approving justified requests for remote working from all workers who request it	ABC CoLAB workers	No. of requests made vs. no. of requests approved	ABC CoLAB Board Human Resources Department
			% Participation rate in the Annual Satisfaction Survey	

	Promote the collection of suggestions for measures relating to work, personal and family life balance.	ABC CoLAB workers	% Suggestions submitted in the Annual Satisfaction Survey relating to professional/personal balance	All Departments
	Promote respect for workers' rest periods	ABC CoLAB workers	Annual ABC CoLAB satisfaction survey	All Departments
Ensure appropriate handling of workplace harassment complaints	Monitor complaints of gender-based harassment. Implement a zero-tolerance policy towards incidents of harassment	ABC CoLAB workers	No. of preventive actions implemented No. of complaints filed Apply the disciplinary inquiry procedure provided for under the applicable legal framework	ABC CoLAB Board CSO / CIO Human Resources Department

Line 5 – Prevention and Combating of Harassment and Gender-Based Violence

Objective	Measure/Activity	Target Group	Indicators	Responsible
Apply a procedure to prevent and combat gender-based violence and harassment in ABC CoLAB workplaces	Creation of an ABC CoLAB Code of Conduct and Ethics	ABC CoLAB workers	% of harassment-related situations reported to the e-mail address created for complaints	Gender Equality Working Group Human Resources Department
	Ensure that all workers comply with the ABC CoLAB Code of Conduct and Ethics, regardless of their position within the institution	ABC CoLAB workers	Share the ABC CoLAB Code of Conduct and Ethics with all workers and publish it on the ABC CoLAB website	ABC CoLAB Board CSO / CIO Human Resources Department Communication & Marketing Department

Part IV – FINAL PROVISIONS

11. Review and Update of the Plan

The Gender Equality Working Group is committed to implementing the proposed Action Plan, with the support of the other ABC CoLAB departments involved. The indicators described in the Plan will be monitored regularly, and feedback from workers will be collected to assess the effectiveness of the measures implemented. In addition, periodic meetings will be held to discuss and implement the best strategies and practices relating to gender equality.

We are likewise committed to carrying out a formal review of this plan every three years, in order to ensure that it continues to respond to the needs of the ABC CoLAB community and remains aligned with national and international best practice.

Whenever possible, ABC CoLAB will support and promote initiatives that foster respect and equal opportunities for all its workers, contributing to the institution's value and to the wellbeing of its human resources.

12. Communication and Clarification Channels

Any questions relating to the interpretation of the content of this Gender Equality Plan, or other matters arising from situations not foreseen or covered by it, should be communicated to line managers and forwarded to the Gender Equality Working Group, with a view to its improvement and updating.

This Gender Equality Plan constitutes a set of commitments and actions on the part of the Gender Equality Working Group and ABC CoLAB, aimed at promoting ethical principles relating to gender equality within the organisational structure, as well as implementing values and good practices at all levels of its activity. ABC CoLAB is committed to respecting and promoting Human Rights and decent labour practices within its sphere of influence, ensuring compliance with workplace health and safety standards by all of the institution's workers.

Accordingly, any act – in particular one that is abusive, opaque or unfair – that results in disrespect for or non-compliance with the principles established in this Plan, for direct or indirect benefit, will be considered a violation and may give rise to the procedures provided for by law, including disciplinary procedures.

13. Bibliographic References

[1]National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination, 2018-2030, «Portugal + Igual» [Portugal + Equal]. Council of Ministers Resolution (RCM) No. 61/2018, of 21 May

[2]European Commission. (2021). *She Figures 2021: Gender in Research and Innovation – Statistics and Indicators*. Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/67d5a207-4da1-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

[3]Eurostat. (2024). *Women in science and technology (2023).* European Commission https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240613-2