

Fostering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in ECerS

An initiative of the BC Network board for the promotion
of EDI within ECerS

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Commitment to EDI

There is growing attention to the inclusivity of minorities and diverse groups, not only at a general societal level but also within scientific communities, which are increasingly attentive to this issue. This heightened awareness reflects a collective recognition of the value that diverse perspectives bring to all fields, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Achieving a more equitable, diverse and inclusive (EDI) environment, particularly in STEM fields, is essential for fostering innovation and creativity. Additionally, it is recognized that adopting such an approach contributes to research progress that better reflect society. Implementing an environment that fully respects and promotes EDI is fundamental for creating the impactful research necessary to advance knowledge and to respond to local, national and global challenges.

Therefore, the current trend in society, as well as within the research community, involves actively addressing this issue. For example, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by United

Nations Member States represent an urgent call to action for all countries. The underrepresentation of minorities is pivotal across SDGs, with several explicitly addressing these issues:

- **Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- **Goals 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- **Goals 10:** Reduce inequality within and among countries

Global EDI situation in STEM

Despite the awareness, the matter is far from resolved and progress still needs to be made. With reference to gender equality, and more specifically the representation of women in STEM fields, current data show that they still do not reach the same numbers or do not occupy the same positions as their male counterparts. While gender parity is relatively maintained at bachelor and master levels, a significant gender gap emerges at the doctoral level and widens dramatically among researchers and even more in the highest career levels (Figure 1). This trend highlights a critical issue in gender equality within higher education and scientific research fields and can be explained by various biases and barriers that women and, more broadly, minorities encounter in STEM careers¹.

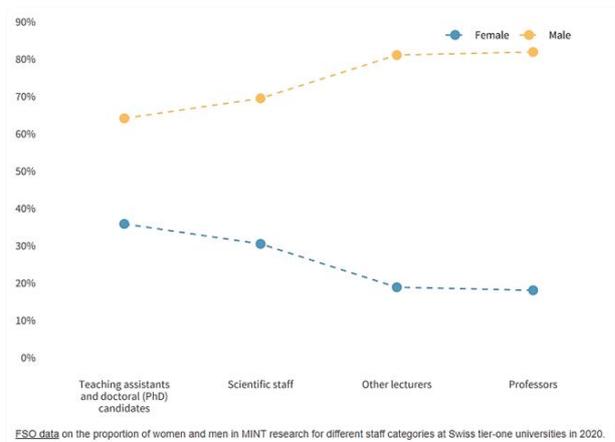


Figure 1. Proportion of women and men in STEM at Swiss universities and institutes of technology (2020), extracted from SNSF Datastory: Gender monitoring (part 2), 2022. Isler, Simona and John, Oliver

What can ECerS do?

As a federation of national research societies, the European Ceramic Society (ECerS) brings together the main leading group in the field of ceramic science and technology in Europe. By coordinating and promoting of the study of ceramics, the ECerS interacts with numerous stakeholders, including research institutions, academic bodies, institutions of governments and more. Given the impact of ECerS on these Communities and Institutions, its active role in promoting and supporting EDI initiatives would produce a driving effect, while position it as a leading example and guide for best practices.

Therefore, within this proposal, the Bioceramic Network board expresses its wiliness to contribute to the establishment and recognition of the ECerS as a proactive and leading organization that intends to support and promote the values, principles, and best practices of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

¹ Grogan, K.E. How the entire scientific community can confront gender bias in the workplace. *Nat Ecol Evol* 3, 3–6 (2019)

Implementing an EDI approach will not only align ECerS with global standards but also enhance innovation, collaboration, and overall excellence in the ceramic sciences.

Proposition of Action Plan

To address this challenge and to provide an effective contribution with durable impact, we propose to adopt the following steps:

1. Establishment of an EDI Committee within ECerS

We have observed that many research organizations (*e.g.*, Elsevier, Springer Nature, etc.) have created special boards to promote EDI and implement best practices within their organizations. Following their example, we would like to propose that ECerS first establish a Committee or Working Group specifically dedicated to EDI issues. Working closely with the ECerS Board, the primary mission of this Committee or Working Group would be to develop and oversee the EDI strategy within ECerS and to monitor the impact of the initiatives.

2. Assessment of EDI Status in the field of interest of ECerS

To effectively launch initiatives targeted at the appropriate audience, we suggest that one of the Committee's initial tasks be to conduct or supervise an analysis of the status of EDI in Europe. Based on a literature review and a survey, the aim of this study would be to clarify and highlight the status of selected scientific communities taken as reference (*e.g.*, STEM disciplines) regarding EDI. This analysis would help position ECerS with respect to these references and propose initiatives.

While all forms of diversity deserve careful attention, an initial focus on gender equality could be considered. In this frame, the aim of the survey, conducted with a scientific and methodological approach, would be to examine the representation of women in various career positions (from early stages to leading roles) and their involvement and success in scientific events, such as conferences (*e.g.*, as presenting, invited, or plenary speakers), competitions, awards, and more.

The outcome of this task will be a comprehensive report on the current situation, which will be presented to the ECerS Board along with proposed actions for implementation.

3. Proposing and launching EDI initiatives

Based on the previous analysis, specific initiatives will be proposed for implementation within ECerS. We could envision different types of initiatives:

- Policies and Practices: to demonstrate the commitment of ECerS both internally and externally, we could propose developing a charter that highlights its dedication in EDI promotion.
- Training and Awareness: to increase awareness within the ECerS community and mitigate biases in our practices, we could propose organizing workshops and/or seminars focusing on best practices to enhance consideration of EDI in research activities.
- Support for minorities: In the future, we plan to implement targeted actions to assist, support, and train minorities to ensure equal opportunities. Some of these actions could

include: (i) increasing the visibility of minorities by highlighting their work on websites, social media platforms, and at conferences; (ii) providing additional funding for individuals with disabilities or those from countries with low Human Development Index or facing extraordinary political situations; (iii) implementing a guided mentoring program to connect mentees who have experienced low levels of inclusion with mentors.

The role of BC Network in EDI initiatives

The topic of EDI was raised and discussed within the BC Network Board. There was significant interest in the topic, recognized by all as of paramount importance, and it received unanimous agreement to actively participate in focused actions addressing these aspects.

The BC Network thus declares its availability and commitment to serve ECeRS as a '**pilot Network**' and to launch and assess potential initiatives on this front.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'ND'.

June 27, 2024, on behalf of the whole board

Nathalie Douard