



REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENDER EQUALITY PLAN FOR THE YEAR 2024 W. SZAFER INSTITUTE OF BOTANY, POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

In reference to the survey conducted in 2023, the current questionnaire was developed based on key thematic areas reflecting the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The adopted methodology enables a comprehensive evaluation of the practices and policies implemented at the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS, in accordance with the guidelines of these documents. The survey results were summarized by identifying strengths and weaknesses. This approach facilitates the highlighting of positive aspects, as well as the precise identification of areas requiring improvement.

A total of 38 research staff members from the Institute participated in the survey, representing approximately 70% of all individuals employed in research positions (including senior researchers, junior researchers, and PhD candidates). Among the respondents, 50% (19 individuals) identified as women, 18% (7 individuals) as men, while the remaining 32% (12 individuals) did not disclose their gender. In terms of professional status, the respondents were evenly split (50% each) between junior research staff (e.g., MSc, PhD) and senior research staff (e.g., habilitated doctors, professors). The largest age group among respondents was 41–50 years (34%), followed by 31–40 years (27%). Age groups under 30, 51–60, and 61+ were less represented, with 5%, 5%, and 3% respectively. Among the respondents, 60% (22 individuals) reported currently holding or having previously held the position of principal investigator in a scientific grant, while 50% (19 individuals) had held or currently hold an organizational role within the Institute.



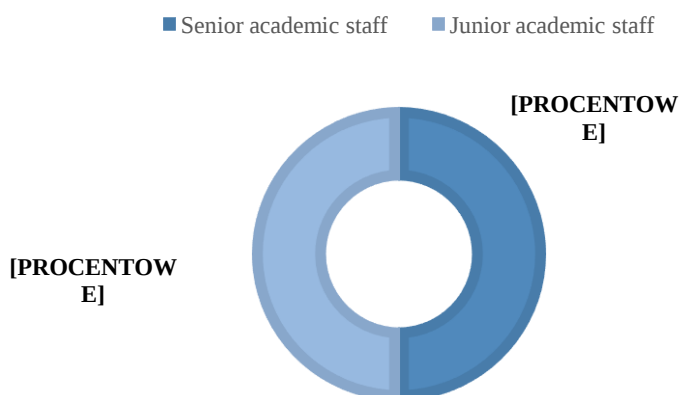
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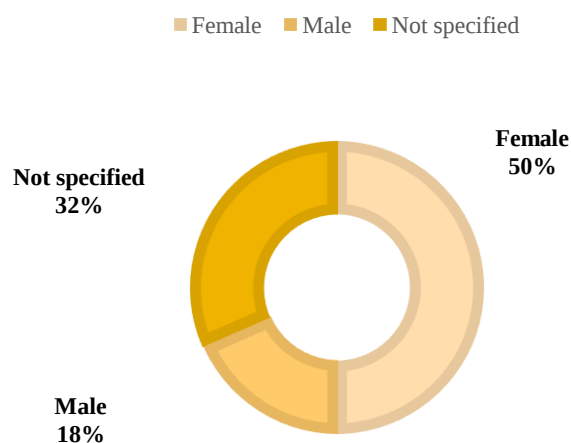


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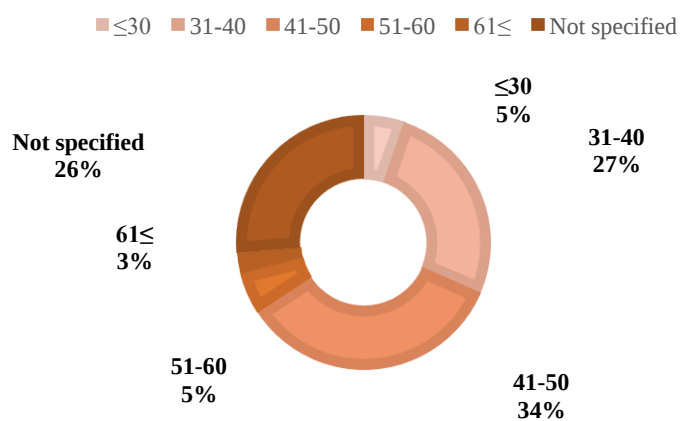
OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS



GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS



RESPONDENTS' AGE DISTRIBUTION





SURVEY RESULTS REGARDING THE GENDER EQUALITY PLAN AT THE W. SZAFER INSTITUTE OF BOTANY, PAS

The survey was conducted among research staff (both senior and junior researchers) of the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS. The report identifies and provides a detailed analysis of the areas requiring corrective actions.

Fig. 1 Survey results on the Gender Equality Plan at the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, Polish Academy of Sciences

- ***Do you believe that the work environment at the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS, is conducive to resolving conflicts between employees***
- ***Do you believe that the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS, as an employer, effectively prevents workplace bullying?***
- ***Do you believe that the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS, as an employer, effectively prevents undesirable behaviors and responds to such actions at an early stage?***

The survey results indicate that the majority of respondents believe the work environment at the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS, is conducive to resolving conflicts between employees, and that the employer effectively prevents bullying as well as undesirable behaviors and responds to such issues at an early stage. A breakdown of the results by gender and professional status shows that among those who answered "Definitely yes" or "Rather yes," there were 11 junior research staff members – 8 women and 3 men – and 9 senior research staff members – 7 women and 2 men. However, fifteen employees expressed the view that the work environment at the Institute is not conducive to conflict resolution or to preventing undesirable behaviors. Among those who answered, "Definitely no" or "Rather no," there were 6 junior researchers – 1 woman, 1 man, and 4 individuals who did not disclose their gender – and 8 senior researchers – including 1 woman, 1 man, and 6 individuals who did not provide gender information. A third group of respondents (4 individuals) expressed mixed opinions. Among junior research staff, 2 women stated that while the work environment at the Institute is conducive to resolving conflicts and the employer effectively addresses undesirable behaviors at an early stage, they believe the measures taken to counteract bullying are ineffective. Among senior research staff, 2 individuals noted that the work environment at the Institute is not supportive of conflict resolution and that the employer's actions against bullying are ineffective.



- ***Have you, while working at the company, been a victim of bullying; experienced undesirable behaviors/actions (short-term); encountered a case of discrimination?***

The survey results clearly indicate that the vast majority of respondents have not experienced problems related to bullying, undesirable actions, or discrimination. Among all respondents, 24 individuals declared that they had not experienced any of these forms of improper treatment in the workplace. Among those who indicated that they had experienced undesirable actions, there were 5 individuals; both undesirable actions and discrimination – 4 individuals; both bullying and undesirable actions such as harassment or intimidation, insults, and isolation – 2 individuals; all of the above at the same time – 3 individuals. A particularly important aspect of the analysis is the fact that some individuals experienced more than one phenomenon at the same time. This may indicate either a cumulative nature of improper behaviors in the workplace, or a subjective interpretation of one's experiences, which may have led to perceiving different phenomena as one shared problem.

In the case of undesirable behaviors, the breakdown of results by gender and professional status indicates that the highest number of cases of improper behaviors was recorded among senior research staff – 9 individuals (including two women, one man, and six individuals who did not disclose their gender). Among junior research staff, 5 individuals reported problems (including one woman, one man, and three individuals who did not disclose their gender). The most common cases involved harassment or intimidation and insults, which most often occurred together. Two individuals reported a feeling of being isolated within the group, while one person (a woman, senior researcher) listed being assigned an excess of tasks below her qualifications as a form of undesirable behavior.

- ***Did you report the problem to your supervisor(s), the Disciplinary Officer, or the Directorate?***

The data analysis also showed a low percentage of problem reporting to supervisors, the Disciplinary Officer, or the Directorate. Only 3 individuals decided to report undesirable actions (2 individuals) and a sense of discrimination (1 individual) – although no formal report was registered in the administration of the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS. This means that over 80% of individuals who experienced problems in the workplace did not take any steps to resolve them. The highest number of cases of refraining from reporting problems was recorded in the group of senior research staff. It is also worth noting that in one case, the



individual who reported inappropriate behavior (a woman, junior research staff) confirmed that the problem (harassment by a co-worker) was resolved. The remaining two individuals (senior research staff) stated that despite reporting, no appropriate actions were taken to resolve the issue. However, there is no information as to why assistance was not provided, how the reporting process proceeded, and whether the problem still persists.

- ***Have you, while working at the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS, encountered other undesirable actions?***

An important aspect raised by 11 respondents was the issue of combining professional duties with parental responsibilities. The majority of reports from this group concerned “Negative comments related to parental responsibilities,” “Work organization conflicting with parental duties,” and “Questioning the possibility of combining professional work with childcare”. The breakdown of results by gender and professional status shows that the problem was reported by 5 junior research staff (including two women and three individuals who did not disclose their gender), and by 6 senior research staff (including one woman, one man, and four individuals who did not disclose their gender).

The survey results reveal divergent opinions among employees regarding the effectiveness of the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS, in counteracting negative phenomena in the work environment. On the one hand, some respondents evaluate the actions undertaken by the institution positively, pointing to effectiveness in preventing conflicts and responding to undesirable behaviors. On the other hand, a significant group of employees believes that the work environment does not foster effective problem-solving. The majority of respondents have not experienced improper treatment, however, a considerable percentage of employee’s report problems, with only a few deciding to report them officially. This may result both from fear of professional consequences and from a lack of faith in the effectiveness of institutional protection mechanisms. In connection with the reporting of bullying, discrimination, and undesirable behaviors, primarily from management (employer and direct supervisors), the continuation of training on counteracting inappropriate behaviors is proposed, which could be directed mainly toward organization leaders and managerial staff. As of 2025, a separate directive has introduced an anti-mobbing and anti-discrimination procedure, which should assist all individuals who feel they are victims of undesirable behaviors in taking appropriate steps to eliminate their sources and resolve conflicts. The course of action in cases of



mobbing and discrimination, defined in *The Anti-bullying and anti-discrimination Procedure of the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS*, has been designed transparently and in accordance with the highest standards of accountability, ensuring the reliability and impartiality of actions taken. Furthermore, the implementation of this document within the Institute constitutes a significant step toward ensuring a safe and friendly work environment, free from mobbing and discrimination.

There is also the issue of difficulties related to combining professional work with parental responsibilities, which poses a problem for some employees. These results may be surprising in light of the broad rights granted to employees with children, especially children under the age of 4. According to *Article 67(19) § 6 of the Labor Code*, the employer is obliged to consider the request of such an employee to perform remote work either fully or partially, unless this is not possible due to the organization of work, or the nature of the tasks performed by the employee. The content of this regulation is also included in the *Agreement on Remote Work at the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS*. Moreover, research staff have the opportunity to use flexible working hours, which allows them to take older children to kindergartens or schools (*Work Regulations of the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS, based in Kraków*). The reported difficulties most likely result from a lack of knowledge about the privileges granted to employees with small children. Employees also reported experiencing unpleasant comments related to having children and combining parenthood with scientific work. Such comments, unfortunately, often result from a lack of empathy and personal culture, which makes them difficult to eliminate entirely through general regulations. Nevertheless, the employer can counteract this phenomenon by addressing the topic in internal communication and introducing consequences for individuals making inappropriate remarks. It is also important that the reported issues be specified and discussed during future meetings with employees as part of sessions of the HR LOGO Committee, in order to minimize potential barriers that hinder the effective reconciliation of professional and private life.

In the survey, in response to the question: ***“Have you experienced: Indirect discrimination (...)”***, 8 respondents provided an answer regarding some problems with implementation of some regulations. However, the lack of detailed information specifying the specific regulations to which the reported concerns relate hinders the ability to conduct a



thorough analysis of the practices implemented at the Institute and take appropriate corrective actions. To effectively and fairly address the issue, it is essential to indicate which regulation raises concerns, as this will allow for verification and the initiation of relevant steps. Therefore, corrective actions are proposed, such as “mechanisms for submitting comments” or “meetings between managers and employees,” which will facilitate effective reporting of any problems among staff. Given the need to ensure transparency and uniform application of the applicable regulations, the LOGO HR Committee has conducted a review of selected documents that, in our opinion, might have been the subject of employee concerns.

1. Based on *The Agreement on Remote Work at the W. Szafer Institute of Botany PAN*, the granting of remote work permissions for employees was analyzed. According to the Institute’s personnel data for 2024, in the case of occasional and partial remote work, all employees eligible for such work were able to utilize it to the extent allowed by the nature of their work. Increased partial remote work was granted to employees (including those raising children under the age of 4) who were eligible and applied for such work. However, the LOGO HR Committee does not have information on whether there were cases where remote work requests were denied by research group leaders. This type of information in future surveys could help identify the source of the issue.
2. According to the personnel data obtained from the Institute, promotions of employees from 2019 to 2024 were analyzed. The data shows that all promotions were conducted according to the applicable rules, not only in 2024 but also in previous years. The details of the promotions are provided in the table (Table 1). The cases presented followed the promotion procedure at IB PAS and involved matters officially initiated based on a letter from the head of the relevant group directed to the Director of IB PAN. The decision on promotion is made by the IB PAS Staff Development Committee, consisting of 8 members, based on the document *Promotion Procedure and Criteria for Candidates Applying for a Higher Position at IB PAS*, which outlines the guidelines for the promotion process and requirements for scientific staff at all career levels. The recommendations of this Committee are approved by the Director of IB PAS. No cases were found where the Director of IB PAS did not approve of the decision made by the aforementioned Committee. There is no information on instances of scientific staff being hindered in their promotion by their direct



supervisors (research group leaders). However, the proposed “mechanisms for submitting comments” by the LOGO HR Committee could potentially help clarify in the future whether the feeling of lack of promotion stems from internal group dynamics.

Type of promotion	Number of employees affected by promotion (for the years 2019-2024)
Transfer from the position of Institute Professor to Professor	2
Transfer from the position of Assistant Professor to Institute Professor	5
Transfer from the position of Assistant to the position of Assistant Professor	10
Transfer from the research-technical position to Assistant Professor	1
Transfer from the position of Biological Specialist to the position of Assistant	5

3. An analysis was also conducted regarding the allocation of bonuses for employees based on the *Salary Regulations of the Institute of Botany, W. Szafer Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków*. According to the Director's Communication of IB PAN dated 29.04.2024, No. 3/2024, as of 01.05.2024, task bonuses, as outlined in the aforementioned Regulations, have been suspended. The suspension of these bonuses was due to the current financial situation of the Institute, related to the lack of a decision regarding the allocation of subsidy funds for employee salary adjustments implemented from 01.01.2024. Ultimately, task bonuses were paid retroactively to employees in December 2024 after the Ministry of Science and Higher Education allocated additional funds.

Another reported issue is the concerns regarding potential favoritism towards individuals or groups of employees. Again, the lack of detailed information and data enabling the identification of the reported cases prevents the implementation of specific actions regarding the aforementioned matters. Due to limited financial resources, funding for research activities at the Institute is highly constrained and subject to strict regulations. For instance, research funds are allocated annually based on the number of “points” earned by academic staff in the previous year. These points are awarded for activities such as publications, grant proposal preparation, and successful project acquisition. The process of allocating funds to



individual researchers and research teams is transparent, and all employees receive the same amount per point earned. Employee travel is financed through external sources, such as individual or externally managed research projects and additional funding (e.g., from the Polish Academy of Sciences' Office for International Cooperation). Furthermore, the Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IB PAS) has implemented a bonus regulation for outstanding publications, which are categorized into three slots. Every employee is entitled to apply for this bonus. The amount of the award depends on the journal's point rating, ranging from 100 to 200 points, which directly determines the bonus amount. Additionally, IB PAS grants a fixed bonus to researchers who secure research grant funding. This bonus is the same for all grant recipients. These matters are governed by the *Bonus Regulation for Employees of the W. Szafer Institute of Botany, PAS*, based in Kraków. This regulation aims to ensure equal conditions for awarding bonuses and funding research among employees. It is possible that the proposed remedial actions, such as the introduction of “feedback mechanisms” or “meetings between supervisors and employees,” may facilitate the effective reporting of any issues experienced by the staff.

There were also comments on the limitation of professional development, including limiting the application for grants to active scientists. Participation in research grants is open and encouraged for all academic staff at the W. Szafer Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences, as it constitutes an important opportunity for scientific development and the implementation of research activities. In order to ensure the effective execution of research projects and to maintain a high standard of scientific outcomes, the Institute has introduced a limitation through *Regulation No. 30/2022*, concerning the number of grants an individual researcher may be involved in simultaneously. According to the applicable rules, a researcher may participate in no more than three grant projects at the same time, in one of the following roles:

- principal investigator (PI),
- task leader within a grant conducted as part of a consortium,
- designated project team member officially approved by the Director, upon the PI's request.

In all other cases, there are no restrictions on grant participation.

This regulation stems from the observed practice of employees becoming involved in successive projects without having finalized or properly reported on previously initiated



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grants. This often results in a lack of scientific publications at the final stages of project implementation, which negatively affects both research quality and the Institute's accountability in financial reporting. The limitation is consistent with the *Regulations on the Preparation and Implementation of Projects Funded from External Sources at IB PAS* and aims to increase research effectiveness, improve scientific productivity, and ensure optimal use of financial resources. The Institute is committed to monitoring the implementation of grants and enforcing the above-mentioned rules to raise the standards of scientific research. Furthermore, an internal review of ongoing projects suggests that this issue may concern only a small number of researchers, as the majority are involved in a single research project or none at all. Additionally, under the same regulation, it is stated that: *"In justified cases, a researcher may apply for the Director's approval to participate in a fourth grant project, but no more."* Following preliminary discussions with the Institute's management, there is agreement on developing an updated version of this regulation. However, such a revision would entail additional obligations for the researchers concerned.



GENDER EQUALITY AT THE W. SZAFER INSTITUTE OF BOTANY, POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

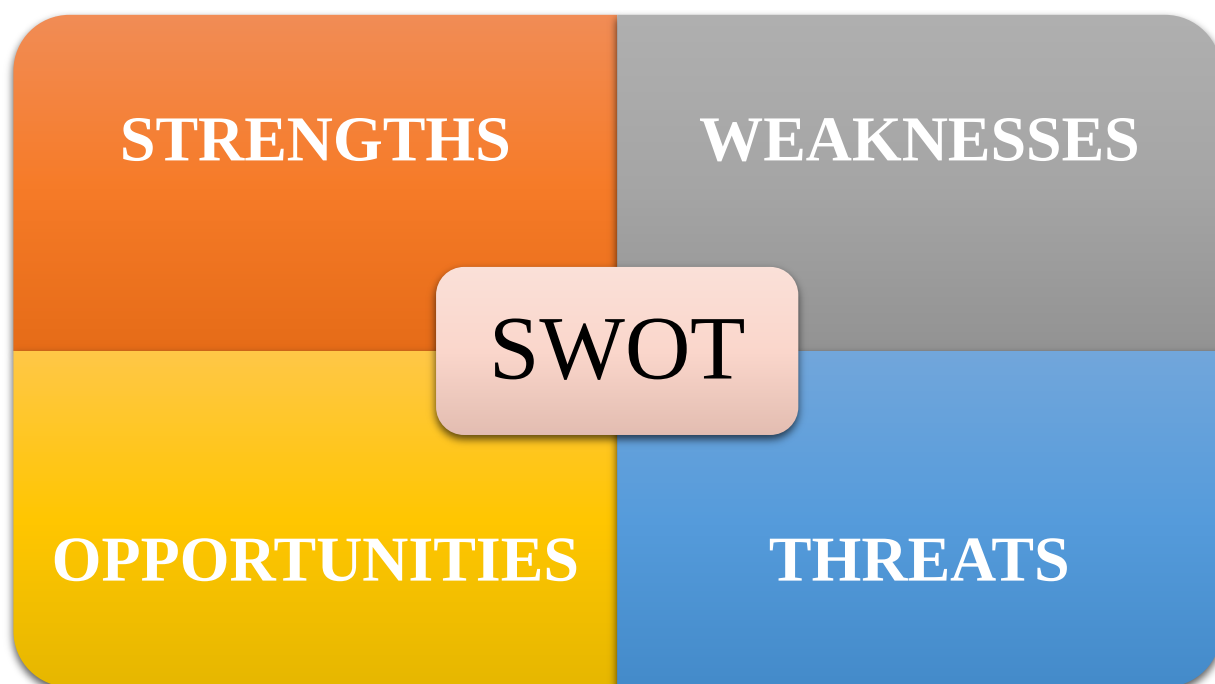
No issues related to unequal treatment of employees on the basis of gender have been identified. Respondents unanimously agreed that the Institute conducts a reliable and consistent gender equality policy in the workplace. The Institute not only strives to ensure equality and diversity within its work environment but also actively fosters a space where everyone has equal opportunities for professional development and advancement. A key priority is the cultivation of a culture of openness and collaboration, where diverse perspectives drive innovation and scientific excellence. Particular emphasis is placed on promoting balanced gender representation in key areas of the Institute's activities—ranging from leadership roles in committees and expert panels, through the organization of prestigious scientific and outreach events, to the recruitment processes for both staff and doctoral candidates in the Doctoral School. This commitment to inclusivity is also reflected in the composition of the Institute's information, advisory, and decision-making bodies, where efforts are made to ensure the presence of representatives of different genders. Moreover, this balance is evident in the leadership of the Scientific Division, where four research groups are led by two women and two men—serving as a tangible example of gender equality being implemented in practice.

The Directorate and the entire Institute community firmly believe that only through the conscious cultivation of an environment based on equal opportunities and mutual respect can science truly reach its full potential. This is why the Institute continuously undertakes actions to eliminate barriers and support talent regardless of gender, thereby reinforcing its position as a modern, inclusive, and innovative research institution.

SWOT ANALYSIS BASED ON SURVEY RESULTS

The purpose of this SWOT analysis is to provide a detailed assessment of the situation regarding mobbing, discrimination, gender equality, and other undesirable behaviors at the W. Szafer Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków. The analysis is based on the results of a survey conducted among academic staff, including both senior and junior researchers.

The findings of the survey were used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current internal policy, as well as to highlight opportunities and threats that may influence the future development of strategies aimed at preventing negative phenomena in the workplace.



STRENGTHS

1. **Existence of Anti-mobbing and Anti-discrimination Procedure** – The Institute has officially adopted documents regulating the prevention of mobbing and discrimination, providing a solid foundation for the effective implementation of equality policies.
2. **Appointment of an ombudsperson for mobbing and discrimination** – The presence of this role enhances transparency and the effectiveness of related actions. Moreover,



the Institute demonstrates a proactive approach in protecting employees from undesirable behaviors.

3. **Organizational awareness of problems** – Conducting the survey and collecting data reflect the Institute's readiness to analyze and address potential issues.
4. **High level of trust in equality-related actions** – A significant proportion of respondents believe that the measures undertaken by the Institute are meaningful and have the potential to improve the organizational climate.
5. **Equal access to information** – Employees have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with procedures for reporting mobbing and discrimination, which promotes awareness and engagement in building a safe work environment.
6. **Active engagement in Equality Plans** – The Institute is implementing initiatives aimed at improving equality and preventing negative workplace behaviors.
7. **Openness to employee Suggestions** – Staff members are encouraged to submit feedback and proposals related to regulations and protection mechanisms.
8. **Structured violation reporting processes** – There are established mechanisms for reporting issues, along with designated individuals responsible for resolving them.
9. **Equal access to leadership and project roles** – Both senior and junior research staff have access to transparent rules regarding the fulfillment of organizational roles.

WEAKNESSES

1. **Reports of unequal treatment** – Despite increased awareness through training and regular surveys, some employees still experience issues related to mobbing and the misappropriation of their achievements by others. The newly introduced *The anti-mobbing and anti-discrimination Procedure* is expected to help address and eventually eliminate this weakness.
2. **Lack of effective mechanisms for resolving reported issues** – Not all cases reported to supervisors are resolved effectively. The new procedure provides an opportunity to test and refine the designated resolution paths.
3. **Limited awareness of promotion procedures** – A significant number of academic staff are unfamiliar with promotion procedures, which may contribute to perceived discrimination in terms of career development. This highlights the need for broader communication about available career advancement pathways.



4. **Unclear access to training opportunities** – A lack of institutional funding for internships or training programs gives the impression of restricted career development opportunities, which may lead to a sense of discrimination among some individuals. Due to financial constraints at the Institute, external training, conference travel, and internships at other institutions are currently underfunded (e.g., through research team budgets) and often shifted to researchers (e.g., through grant applications).
5. **Existence of negative comments** – Despite existing regulations, some employees continue to experience unpleasant situations. Such behavior often relates to individual employees' personal culture. Nevertheless, the employer can address this through increased training, awareness campaigns, and disciplinary measures for inappropriate behavior.
6. **Insufficient educational initiatives** – There is a low number of general training sessions on the prevention of mobbing and discrimination. As part of its corrective actions, the Institute plans to organize training sessions focused on conflict management.
7. **Low number of reported incidents** – This may indicate that employees fear repercussions or lack confidence in the effectiveness of procedures. The new Anti-Mobbing and Anti-Discrimination Procedure is intended to address this issue and encourage more open reporting.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. **Introduction of regular training for all employees** – Educational initiatives focused on mobbing, discrimination, and equality can enhance awareness and improve the organizational culture.
2. **Development of anonymous incident reporting mechanisms** – Implementing digital applications or dedicated anonymous submission boxes could increase the comfort and sense of security for those reporting incidents.
3. **Collaboration with external experts** – Partnering with institutions specializing in equality and anti-discrimination may provide new tools, insights, and working methods.
4. **Stronger integration of anti-discrimination policy with leadership roles** – Establishing clear rules regarding the removal of individuals from managerial



positions in cases of confirmed misconduct and violation of good practices could reinforce accountability.

5. **Regular consultations with employees** – These sessions would focus on discussing key issues, gathering feedback, and proposing solutions to improve internal policies and practices.
6. **Intergenerational and intergroup integration** – Fostering connections between different groups of employees could enhance communication and workplace atmosphere.
7. **Improved promotion of anti-discrimination success stories** – Highlighting positive changes and successful initiatives may help build trust in protective mechanisms and encourage broader engagement.

THREATS

1. **Downplaying the issue by some employees** – Certain individuals may perceive mobbing and discrimination as marginal concerns. The implementation of the new Anti-Mobbing and Anti-Discrimination Procedure, along with planned training initiatives, aims to mitigate this issue.
2. **Polarization within the staff community** – Differing views on anti-discrimination measures may lead to tensions and divisions among employees.
3. **Lack of actual enforcement of anti-mobbing policies** – If regulations remain purely formal without tangible consequences, employee morale may deteriorate.
4. **Ineffective mechanisms for enforcing rules** – The absence of real accountability for perpetrators may undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of the procedures.
5. **Limited financial and human resources** – A shortage of qualified personnel and budgetary constraints may hinder the implementation of new initiatives and training programs.
6. **Reluctance of management to implement changes** – Resistance to new procedures and the perceived burden of allocating time and resources could delay or weaken the rollout of necessary reforms.
7. **Fear of retaliation after reporting** – Employees may refrain from reporting incidents due to concerns about negative professional consequences or reputational harm.



8. **Staff turnover impacting continuity of equality policies** – Changes in leadership or staff may lead to decreased prioritization of equality and anti-discrimination policies over time.

CORRECTIVE ACTIONS BASED ON THE SURVEY RESULTS AND SWOT ANALYSIS

Based on the SWOT analysis, key recommendations include the introduction of regular training sessions and the development of anonymous reporting tools. These measures will facilitate further progress in creating a safe and equitable working environment. To improve the functioning of the Institute of Botany PAS, the following corrective actions should be implemented:

1. **Amendment or removal of the provision:** “the performer designated by the Director through the project leader (according to the Regulations for the preparation and implementation of research projects funded from external sources at IB PAS)” in Resolution No. 30/2022, § 1, item 2 – Introducing more flexible rules will better utilize the potential of researchers, increase their publication output, and enable the conduct of innovative and competitive research.
2. **Open and safe reporting of problems and development initiatives** – The introduction of two complementary mechanisms: (1) a dedicated anonymous reporting platform, and (2) direct dialogue with team leaders, will provide employees with secure ways to report issues and propose developmental initiatives.
3. **Conflict management training** – Aiding in resolving disputes effectively, improving communication, and building better team relationships.
4. **Professional development training for researchers** – Supporting the development of research competencies and fostering effective scientific work.
5. **Social initiatives** – Organizing joint projects and meetings that foster closer connections and allow for improved relationships outside of daily work responsibilities.