



MEDICAL UNIVERSITY  
„PROF. DR. PARASKEV STOYANOV“  
VARNA

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

for Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna  
(2023-2025)



## INTRODUCTION:

Medical University “Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov” – Varna (MUV) is dedicated to providing support to all staff members, regardless of gender, nationality, religion, disability, age, cultural background or sexual identity. To do so, it is necessary to create conditions for safeguarding careers. We are aware of the fact that an ongoing improvement of framework conditions is vital for recruiting and keeping excellent staff members. By improving equality of opportunities at MUV, we also increase our appeal as a research institution. The Equal Opportunities Policy for MUV (EOP-MUV) is a fundamental action of our University. EOP-MUV also serves as a Gender Equality Plan.

MUV aims to raise the research profile of MUV and its staff and enhance the visibility and attractiveness of MUV in the European Research Area (ERA), improving decision-making in providing balanced personnel structure, stimulating an equal opportunity aware culture change.

MUV has supported the formulation of the EOP in the context of its adhesion to the Human Resource Excellence in Research politics of the European Commission assuring that the institution actively applies the principles of the Charter of European Scientists and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

The EOP includes actions to reach the objectives of the Action Plan of MUV which pursues the policy of discrimination-free working environment in accordance with the Regulations for the Internal Labour Code and the Law on Protection against Discrimination. MUV's working and educational environment favours researchers and students with diverse needs promoting cultural change and equal opportunities in MUV and its Research Institute. The procedure to launch the development and implementation of an Equal Opportunities Policy in MUV was initiated at a meeting of the Scientific Board of the Research Institute of MUV (RIMUV) on 09.12.2021. On 28.09.2021 representatives of the Research Institute participated in a EC training on the development and implementation of such a policy.

The EOP-MUV outlines the status quo, the goals until 2025, and the measures to achieve these goals. An evaluation is to be carried out once a year and an update - in three years by the university's management.

The EOP-MUV adheres to institutional, European, and global strategies, policies, and criteria.

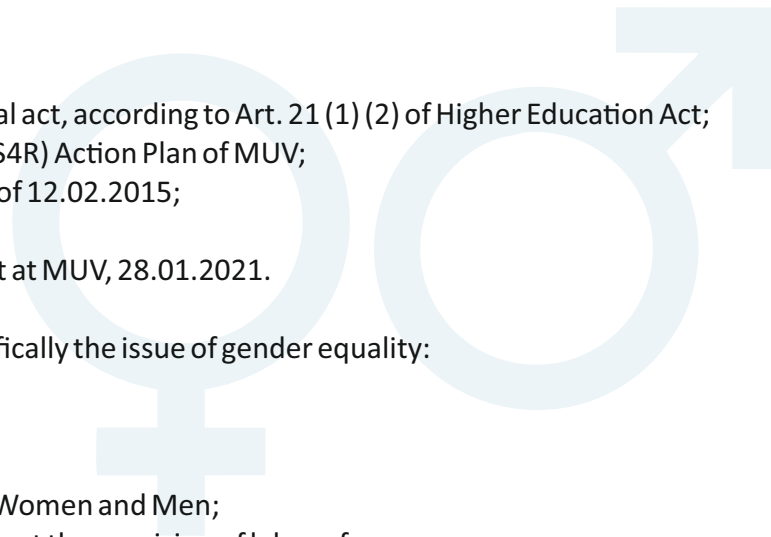
## LEGAL FRAMEWORK:

- EU - Gender Equality Strategy 2020 – 2025;
- EU Directive 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers;
- 2015 Report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality on women's careers in science and universities, and glass ceilings encountered;
- Council of Europe - Gender Equality Strategy 2018 – 2023;
- Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence;
- ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (Convention No. 190), Recommendation No. 206 - the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work;
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights and both International Covenants on Human Rights;

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979;
- 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 5: Gender Equality, Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities);
- European Institute for Gender Equality (Gender Equality Index, GEAR Tool);
- European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers;
- Horizon Europe Programme (2021-2027);
- World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021;
- Constitution of Republic of Bulgaria;
- Protection Against Discrimination Act;
- Persons with Disabilities Act;
- Employment Promotion Act;
- Republic of Bulgaria's Science, Education, and Technology Strategy;
- Higher Education Act amend. 25.02.2020 – Art. 57 (1);
- Act on Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Regulations on the implementation of the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act;
- Labour Code amend. 22.12.2020;
- MUV's Strategy 2021 – 2025;
- MUV Code of Ethics;
- Regulations for the activity of MUV, basic internal act, according to Art. 21 (1) (2) of Higher Education Act;
- Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) Action Plan of MUV;
- Directive on Academic Staff Attestation at MUV of 12.02.2015;
- Internal MUV regulations;
- Regulations on the Academic Staff Development at MUV, 28.01.2021.

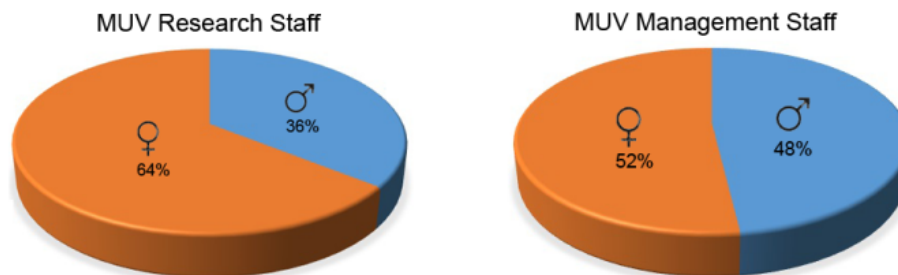
Bulgarian national legal documents addressing specifically the issue of gender equality:

- Protection Against Discrimination Act;
- Law on Equality between Women and Men;
- National Strategy for Promoting the Equality of Women and Men;
- Labour Code, Art. 1, Chapter 6. Major obligations at the provision of labour force;
- Employment Promotion Act;
- Higher Education Act – Art. 55.



## Inventory/Status report:

MUV aims at gender equality, with the purpose of ensuring that they are proportionally represented at all levels in the University structure. This is demonstrated by the analysis of the gender distribution among the total MUV research staff, and the MUV Management staff. The total research staff of MUV includes 818 people, 293 of whom are men, which is 36%, while women are 525 (64%). The predominance of women reflects the greater interest of women in being part of the research and teaching staff of MUV. Among the management staff of the University, there is a full equality between men and women - 48% are men, 52% are women.



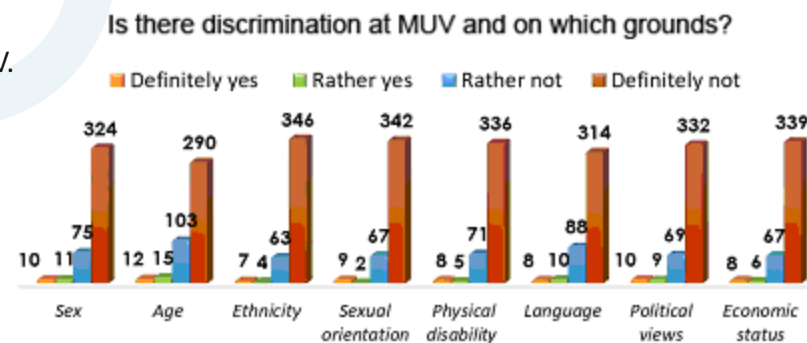
To better understand the needs of the researchers at MUV, an online questionnaire survey was carried out in the period May-June 2021, aimed at gathering reliable information on the expectations and needs of the MUV employees, especially of the researchers, in terms of working environment and equal opportunities access. The survey provided information that will help MUV draw up an effective EOP.

All MUV employees were invited to take part in the survey. During the survey, the total physical number of employees at MUV was 818. The questionnaire was completed by 420 respondents in total who took part in the survey in this way. This represents an overall response rate of 51.3%. The survey was conducted online in Google Disk, which provides sufficient functionality to produce the questionnaire and meets all requirements for personal data protection and data security in general. The questionnaire was available to all employees in two language versions (Bulgarian and English).

### 1. Presence of discrimination at MUV

The survey probed the general opinion of the respondents on the presence of discrimination at MUV.

According to the survey conducted among the MUV researchers during the EOP-MUV preparation, there is an extremely low level of discrimination at MUV (less than 2% of the responders) on any of the grounds listed in the survey: sex, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical disabilities, language, religious or political views, and economic status.

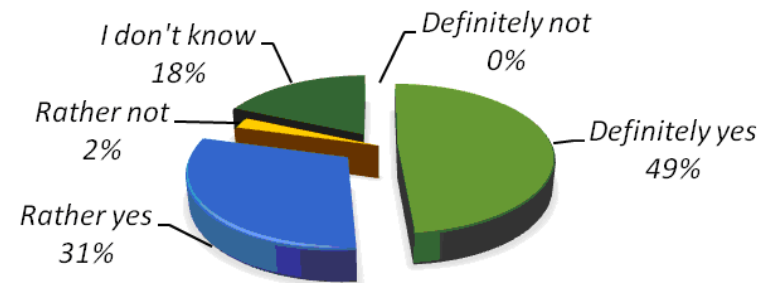


## 2. Working conditions for employees with disabilities at MUV

MUV provides appropriate working environment for university employees with disabilities. A total of 80% of the respondents from the online survey believe that normal working conditions are provided for employees with disabilities. The share of responders who have not inquired or have declared that they have no information is approx. 18%, indicating the need to enhance the information regarding the access of disabled people to the infrastructure.

In summary, the working and educational climate at MUV is favourable for researchers and students with different needs, as they have physical access to all resources and infrastructure. A station for visually impaired people has been purchased for the MUV library.

*Are there good working conditions for persons with disabilities at MUV?*

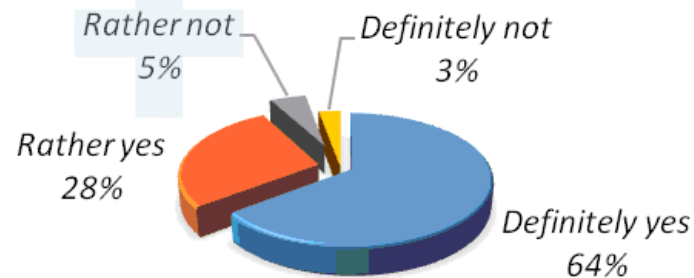


## 3. Equal opportunities at the workplace at all levels

According to most (92%) of the respondents in the online survey, at present there is a gender equality in MUV at all working levels, including the University Management positions.

The answers to the question presented above are evenly distributed among the different groups of respondents, including men, women, PhD students, junior professors, and senior professors.

*Is there gender equality in the workplace, at all levels?*



#### 4. Existence of mechanisms to deal with discrimination at the University

In case of any irregularity signal, including discrimination, the case is examined by persons/commission authorized by the representative of the organization depending on the specific case. According to most (91%) of the respondents, the anti-discrimination mechanisms at MUV are effective. Less than 10% of the respondents report that the mechanisms to deal with discrimination are not effective, 75% of these respondents are women.

#### 5. The HR recruitment procedures at MUV

The survey investigated the opinion of the respondents on the transparency and effectiveness of the MUV recruitment procedures.

The results of the survey show that the criteria for staff selection are clear and transparent, according to more than 90% of the respondents. The requirements for each position are announced in advance and described in detail.

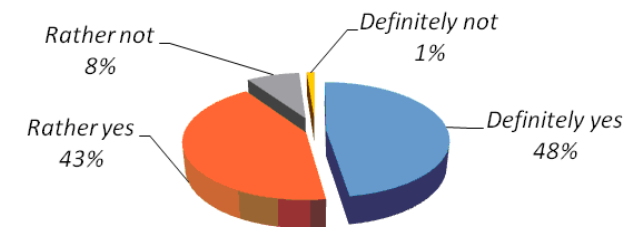
Related application guidelines are also available. A total of 386 (92%) of the respondents believe that the procedures for recruitment of staff at MUV are transparent and efficient, and only 34 (8%) disagree with this statement.

#### 6. Career development selection committees at MUV

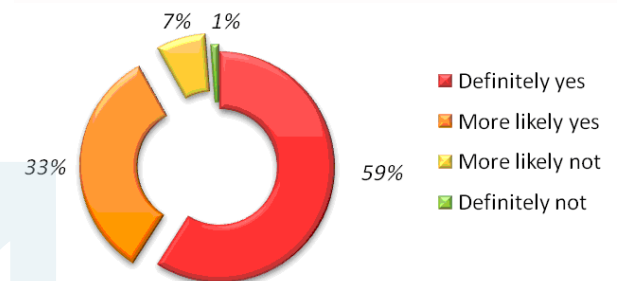
The employment of researchers at MUV is governed by the national legal framework as well as by that of the University (Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria). The Academic Staff Development Act has introduced minimum requirements for all academic positions at national level. The recruitment of personnel is carried out solely on the basis of criteria directly related to research, teaching, and other activities, e.g. appropriate educational background, qualifications, publications, PhD student management. In the professional fields of Medicine and Dental Medicine, clinical qualifications and skills of the candidates are also taken into account. In the online survey among the MUV researchers, 90% of them responded that the procedures for selection and evaluation of staff at the university are transparent. While the selection procedure currently puts focus on the quantitative criteria to evaluate the candidates, a higher contribution of qualitative criteria could be introduced in the future.

Selection and appointment of researchers are carried out via an open competition rooted in criteria and procedures described in the Act on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. Academic staff selection procedures at MUV are run by scientific selection committees. Currently, there is a gender balance in the composition of these selection committees. The analysis shows a slight predominance of women in the scientific selection committees for various positions at MUV.

Do you think that there are mechanisms to deal with discrimination at the University?



Are the HR recruitment procedures at MUV sufficiently transparent and efficient?



The Regulations on the Development of the Academic Staff at MUV are subject to periodic updates. In each competition and employee evaluation, professional experience and competencies are leading criteria. Art. 5 and Art. 6 of the Regulations on the Institutional Implementation of the Code of Recruitment of Researchers (2016) set out the general rules for evaluation and appointment of researchers at MUV, which are fully compliant with the requirements of the Code of the European Commission.

According to the Regulations on the Institutional Implementation of the European Commission's Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, MUV is committed to providing each researcher with working conditions that ensure his/her health and safety; employees are regularly trained in safety and labour rules: safety and fire protection, safe work in laboratories, safe work with clinical, biological, chemical, radioactive materials. All necessary briefings are provided as well as regular risk assessment. A number of documents adopted by MUV support the efforts to provide an adequate and creative working environment for its researchers. The University provides the necessary free work clothes and protective equipment for the personnel. Labour Code, Higher Education Act, Collective Labour Agreement, and Regulations on Internal Labour Order at MUV regulate the working hours, holidays and sick leaves, and maximum number of working hours per week and per day. The Bulgarian legislation provides for the possibility of combining maternity and parental leave with work, in part-time employment.

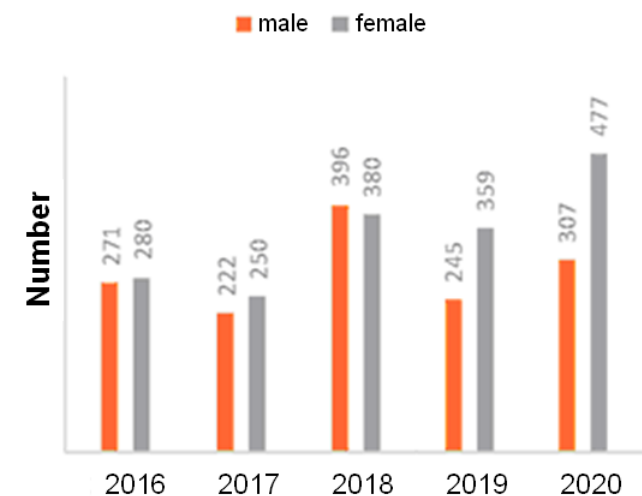
Female employees with 2, 3 or more children are entitled to additional paid leave of 2 or 4 working days, respectively. In the future, more efforts can be made regarding the enabling of researchers to work flexibly or to work remotely whenever the conditions allow.

Survey results show that researchers are principally satisfied with the working conditions and this allows them to successfully combine work with family life. The suggestions for improvement are mainly with respect to flexible working hours and the use of creative leave. Provision of facilities, access to Internet and scientific literature are highly evaluated, and least satisfaction is expressed with regard to availability of specialized equipment and consumables. MUV provides to its employees spaces for rest and recovery in all University buildings. A sports complex is available to the MUV staff. Catering facilities are set in close proximity to the faculties with the largest number of scientists. Funding, remuneration, social and health insurance contributions are in line with the national legislation and provide attractive working conditions at MUV. Respondents acknowledge that MUV provides access and facilities adapted for researchers with disabilities: these researchers represent 2.22% of the academic staff.

The overall structure of the EOP is divided into the following four key areas:

1. Designing an institutional change towards equality and equal opportunities;
2. Commitment of MUV and sustainable support towards equal opportunity environment;
3. Institutional culture on equal opportunity and non-discrimination;
4. Work and personal life integration.

### Ration of female/male members of Selection Committees at MUV



## Action plan of MUV regarding the Equal Opportunities for all employees/Fields of action, objectives and measures

Action	Goal	Measures	Indicator	Actor	Responsibility	Time Frame
1. Designing an institutional change towards equality and equal opportunities	Integrating the concept of equality and equal opportunities into the university legal documents and practices	1.1. Adapt university regulatory documents from the equality and equal opportunities perspectives	Regulatory documents revised	All employees	Legal Department, University management body	2022 - 2023
		1.2. Prepare a policy document that will formally regulate issues related to various forms of discrimination in the processes of evaluation and selection of employees, where the criteria are experience, education, achievements, etc. in a particular area	Policy document	All employees	Legal Department, University management body	2023
		1.3. Establish and operate an University Ombudsman person in support to the EOP of MUV (Supports the change in the EOP area)	Ombudsman person position established	All employees	General Assembly	2024
		1.4. Ensure EOP as an integral part of MUV's ethics policy	Ethics committee regulations adopted accordingly	All employees and students	Ethics Committee	2023
2. Commitment of MUV and sustainable support towards equal opportunity environment	Promoting and enshrinement of equality in the University culture, processes, and practice; ensuring that MUV is an organization free from discrimination on any grounds.	2.1. Equal Opportunity Policy follow-up meetings of the EOP Implementation group with the Rector and senior management body of the University	Meetings for EOP implementation, meeting minutes	Departmental delegates	EOP Implementation group, Rector and University management body, Deans, and faculty delegates	Continuous



		<p>2.2. Equal Opportunity Task Force - strengthening the flow of information to all employees and from them to the management. (Employees meet to discuss topics related to gender equality on an ad hoc basis. Other persons (representatives of the senior management and professional organisations) are invited depending on the occasion.)</p>	A Equal Opportunity Task Force is established.	Departmental delegates	University management body, Deans, directors of administrative units, faculty delegates	Continuous
		<p>2.3. Developing an appropriate procedure to investigate any reported acts of discrimination by Ombudsman appointed for this purpose.</p>	Good practices to encourage openness and reduce cases of discrimination on any grounds established	All employees and students	An independent official (ombudsman/mediator); Ethics Committee	2024
		<p>2.4. Introducing a comprehensive protocol for reporting and acting upon cases of discrimination and violence</p>	Good practices to encourage openness and reduce cases of discrimination on any grounds	All employees and students	Ombudsman institution; Ethics Committee	2024
3. Institutional culture on equal opportunity and non-discrimination	Promoting EO in the individual culture, processes, and practice	<p>3.1. Introducing continuous training for managers at different levels on EOP and its implementation</p>	Maintenance of a desired state of equal opportunities and gender equality in all spheres of action of the University.	Rector and university management body, Deans, directors of administrative units, faculty delegates	Career development department, HR department, Ethics Committee	Once a year

		3.2. Initiatives to favour a widespread equal opportunities and gender equality competence at all levels of the University (Employees are made aware of the existing patterns of favouritism, bias and hate speech through training opportunities and sensitized to a conscious open dealing (awareness).	An increased number of awareness trainings on equal opportunities, discrimination-free environment, and gender equality issues.	MUV's employees: researchers, lecturers, technical and administrative staff	Career development department, HR department, Ethics Committee	Once a year
		3.3. Sharing career good practices - role models for women	Initiatives for raising awareness on diversity and equality	Newly recruited staff	Career development department, HR department	Continuously
4. Work and personal life integration	Promoting integration of work with family and personal life	4.1. Provision of structured support inside the organization for child-care, for family members with special needs, for elder family members etc.	Supply of basic child care; Provision of services for work and personal life integration	Academic staff, technical and administrative staff	Rector and university management body, Deans, faculty delegates	Continuously
		4.2. Implementing flexible working times arrangements, incl. remote working, and the use of creative leave at the University	documents, and collective labor agreement revised	MUV's employees: researchers, lecturers, technical and administrative staff	Rector and University management body, career development department, HR department Policies, internal legal	2024

		4.3. Implementing bidirectional communication to identify workplace difficulties quickly and efficiently	Improved index of employee satisfaction with their work environment	MUV's employees: researchers, lecturers, technical and administrative staff	University management body, career development department, HR department	Continuously
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## FINAL PROVISIONS

1. Any Amendments or modifications to the current policy are subject to the same approval process as the original policy.
2. The current policy was adopted by a resolution of the Academic Council of the Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov"- Varna on 03.04.2023, Minutes No. 66 of 03.04.2023.



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