

Mission statement and Bylaws of the Women in Science at Nencki

This version was approved by the Women in Science at Nencki Council on October 1st, 2021.

1. Mission

The Women in Science at Nencki initiative, hereafter referred to as *the WISAN*, exists to promote the interests of female as well as other underrepresented community scientists, and advocate for equality and elimination of discrimination and bias in science and research; provide a platform for networking and mentoring for women and underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, in order to assist them in developing skills relevant to advancing their careers, to work with other scientific, educational, and women's organizations in developing national, international, and community programs that meet the above goals, and to provide recognition of individual women and minority scientists. We will take action by:

1. Raising awareness within the scientific community of the discrimination associated with gender and other under-represented groups, and the difficulties that female and minority scientists face in or derived from their professional environment by organizing events to discuss these matters.
2. Fostering connections between female and minority scientists at all career stages to create the WISAN community.
3. Promoting the implementation of equality policies within scientific institutions.
4. Encouraging inclusion and diversity among all members of WISAN's community and advocating on their behalf to achieve a supportive and enriching environment.
5. Helping the scientists from underrepresented groups to develop skills and advance in their careers by organizing workshops, trainings and meetings.

The WISAN seeks to promote diversity and inclusion for all members of the scientific community regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, national origin, religion, or socioeconomic, marital, or family status across all disciplines of STEMs.

2. Membership

The WISAN shall have two (2) types of membership: WISAN Members and WISAN Supporters.

We consider **WISAN Members** all individuals that actively participate in the WISAN Organization (Secretary, Speaker, Committee Chairs, Committee Members and *ad hoc* position-holders). We consider **WISAN Supporters** all individuals interested in the activities of the WISAN and in agreement with the WISAN's mission. As part of the WISAN's host institution, we also consider WISAN Supporters all individuals associated with the Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology, Polish Academy of Sciences, hereafter referred to as *the Nencki Institute*, who consider themselves as such.

We consider members of the **WISAN Community** all WISAN Members and Supporters.

2.1 Termination of membership

Any WISAN Member may withdraw their membership at any time by tendering a written resignation to the WISAN Council, preferably via email.

The occurrence of any of the following events shall constitute grounds for termination of the WISAN membership:

- Conduct being seriously detrimental to the goals of the WISAN or violation of the WISAN rules, including, but not limited to, a violation of these Bylaws.
- Repeated failure of a Member in a position of responsibility to meet expected deadlines.
- Abandonment of duties as defined in these Bylaws.

Council may initiate proceedings for termination of membership by adopting a resolution of intention to take such action against the affected Member. The resolution must be adopted by at least a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote of the entire Council. A written notice shall thereupon be given to the affected Member stating the action proposed to be taken by the Council (i.e. termination of membership) and the facts and circumstances relied upon by the Council as the justification for such intended action. The notice shall also specify the date on which the Council proposes to take such action, which shall be not less than thirty (30) days from the date of the notice. The notice shall further advise the affected Member that the Member is entitled to an opportunity to be heard, either orally or in writing, prior to the date of the intended action. Upon request by the Member, the Council shall schedule a meeting for the purpose of hearing any evidence the Member desires to present to the Council in person or through a representative selected by the Member. After such hearing, the Council may re-evaluate the content of the resolution and either proceed as previously intended or change the course of action according to the circumstances. The decision by the Council concerning termination of membership shall be final and binding.

3. Organization

The governing body of the WISAN shall be the WISAN Council, hereafter referred to as *the Council*. The Council shall oversee the creation and management of activities, partnerships, and overall vision of the WISAN in accordance with its mission. The Council comprises all the Committee Chairs (one or two per Committee), the Secretary and the Speaker, and each Committee comprises the WISAN Committee Members, who shall be overseen by the Committee Chairs. The WISAN Committee Members are involved in initiatives and activities undertaken by a given WISAN Committee.

The WISAN shall be organized into the following working Committees:

- Advocacy
- Public Relations
- Networking
- Professional Development

The names, aims, and activities of the roles and Committees above are defined in the following paragraphs.

Each WISAN Committee shall have specific aims and its activities shall be overseen by one (1) or two (2) WISAN Committee Chairs. When elected, they shall hold the office for one calendar year (12 months) unless prevented by unforeseen circumstances. Any given WISAN member may be re-elected, however, no more than for 2 subsequent terms.

The Committee Chairs, the Secretary and the Speaker can create *ad hoc* positions to support the ongoing initiatives of their teams. *Ad hoc* positions shall take the form of commissions, consultants, proxies, spokespeople, or assignees and shall be either standing or temporary as decided by the Council.

Any changes or amendments made to this document shall be compiled by the WISAN Council and affirmed by the majority of the Council Members through a formally written vote (written or electronic) during a WISAN Bylaws Meeting.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Council

The role of the Council is to lead the WISAN. Therefore, the responsibilities of the WISAN Council Members are as follows:

- Maintain a strong and active relationship with the leadership of the Nencki Institute.
- Ensure suggestions, issues, and concerns brought to the WISAN are discussed in the General Meetings.
- Organize the timely election of new WISAN Council Members, as overseen by the Secretary.
- Meet together once every four (4) months separately from other WISAN meetings to discuss upcoming events, activities, and partnerships with the organization in the Executive Council Meetings.
- Schedule the General Meetings and the Executive Council Meetings, as overseen by the Speaker.
- Schedule the Bylaws Meetings to review and amend the Mission and the Bylaws of the WISAN (September or October of each calendar year).
- Encourage active participation of WISAN Members in the Committees and meet with the appropriate Committees when required.
- Provide the Advisory Board with an annual report regarding the developments in the WISAN Community.

4.2 Secretary

The role of the Secretary is to maintain records of the WISAN's activities, ensure that each meeting progresses smoothly, and finalize both the meeting agenda and the meeting internal reports. To this end, the responsibilities of the WISAN Secretary are as follows:

- Collect the proposed agendas from each Committee Coordinator at least one (1) week before the General Meetings and create a final meeting agenda which will be sent to all WISAN Members at least two (2) days before the General Meetings.
- Collect and compile proposed changes or amendments and distribute among the Council Members at least seven (7) days before the WISAN Bylaws Meetings.
- Discuss the draft agendas for the General Meetings with the Council.
- Oversee the Speaker in their meeting scheduling responsibilities.
- Ensure that, during all WISAN meetings, the discussion generally adheres to the agenda and that each Committee receives ample time to address the Council.
- Record, archive, and disseminate the minutes from the General Meetings with all WISAN Members within seven (7) days of the meeting.
- Record, archive, and disseminate the minutes from the Executive Council Meetings with the WISAN Council Members within seven (7) days of the meeting.

- Create a culture of inclusion by ensuring that all ideas and thoughts are represented.
- Create and (if needed) oversee amending of an internal communication plan, published as an addendum to the Bylaws.
- Maintain and curate records of all WISAN publications (e.g. statements, press releases, articles, media publications, media-presence records, reports and all other relevant documents) in close collaboration with the Chairs of the Public Relations Committee and the Speaker.
- Maintain accurate contact information of current and previous Council Members.
- Maintain a record of the attendance to the General Meetings, the Executive Council Meetings, and the Bylaws Meetings, and determine if a quorum is present when required.
- Archive any Individual Committee Meeting summaries sent by the Committee Chairs.

4.3 Speaker

The role of the Speaker is to serve as a bridge between the WISAN Council and the public by speaking on behalf of the former whenever deemed appropriate, by either direct recommendation of the WISAN Council or under special circumstances. To this end, the responsibilities of the WISAN Speaker are as follows:

- Stay well informed of all ongoing WISAN initiatives to be able to speak on them upon reasonable request from either WISAN Community or other interested entities.
- Maintain active relationships with the Committees with the specific goal of supporting the effective reporting on realization of the ongoing activities whenever necessary.
- Participate in the Public Relations Committee Meetings whenever required by its Chair(s).
- Speak on behalf of the WISAN Council when needed, in accordance with the instructions from the Chair(s) of the Public Relations Committee and under their supervision.
- Be actively involved in drafting the WISAN Council's most crucial documents, including, but not limited to, its statements and press releases, and get well-acquainted with their content before publication.
- Oversee the preparation of an annual report regarding the developments in the WISAN Community to be presented during the WISAN Executive Council Meeting and reported to the Advisory Board.
- Schedule and organize WISAN meetings, specifically WISAN General Meetings, WISAN Bylaws Meetings, and WISAN Executive Council Meetings as consulted with the Secretary and under their supervision.
- Report to the Council during the General Meetings on all the above mentioned activities.

4.4 Advocacy Committee

The role of the Advocacy Committee is to advocate on behalf of female and other minority scientists to address unmet needs in the WISAN Community. This includes issues related to inclusion, diversity, and the general well-being of female and minority scientists. The Committee will also identify areas where the WISAN can support female and minority scientists to enrich their experience at the Nencki Institute and as a part of a global scientific community. The responsibilities of the Advocacy Committee are as follows:

- Recruit Committee Members to advocate on behalf of specific groups of female and minority scientists (e.g. parents or LGBTQI+) or specific issues (e.g. mental health).
- Consult and advise on all aforementioned issues and work with all the scientific and science-related bodies at the Nencki Institute and beyond, whose activities are relevant to WISAN's mission.
- Identify and promote solutions to issues faced by female and minority scientists at the Nencki Institute and beyond.

- Collect, compile, and provide demographic data on the Nencki Institute's scientific community and beyond to identify underrepresented groups and educate the WISAN community on these disparities.
- Maintain a strong relationship with science-related entities including, but not limited to National Science Center, National Centre for Applied Research, Polish Academy of Sciences, in order to work collaboratively towards productive action for scientists from underrepresented groups in Poland and globally.
- Represent the WISAN by giving presentations, lectures, workshops, and participating in debates and discussions on issues relevant to WISAN's mission, both at the events organized by WISAN and on request of relevant external entities.
- Generate and maintain a collection of resources to empower the WISAN Community, particularly members of underrepresented groups, those with disabilities, and individuals facing discrimination or harassment.

4.5 Public Relations Committee

The Communication and Public Relations Committee shall manage communication between the WISAN and the scientific community, the general public, and the media, both in Poland and globally. To achieve these goals, the responsibilities of the Public Relations Committee are as follows:

- Collaborate with Committee Chairs to advertise WISAN events to the broadest extent possible, to the WISAN community and beyond.
- Manage the WISAN website by keeping it up-to-date and adding new sections and resources when necessary.
- Regularly manage all aspects of the WISAN's presence in traditional and on social media, with the specific goal of reaching out to the broadest possible public.
- Maintain an active relationship with the Speaker and oversee their communication with the public and its adherence to the instructions issued by the Chair(s) of the Public Relations Committee.
- Maintain the WISAN's email address by replying to emails or directing them to the appropriate WISAN Committee Chairs in a timely manner. Collect and responsibly manage the mailing list.
- Safeguard the privacy of female and minority scientists within the boundaries of its tasks and maximize transparency regarding data usage.
- Archive any videos, photos, and records of attendance at WISAN events.
- Promote the mission and values of the WISAN to other communities inside and outside of the Nencki Institute and, if needed, mediate the initial contact between these organizations and the appropriate WISAN Committees.

4.6 Networking Committee

The role of the Networking Committee is to organize events to bring WISAN together in both formal and informal settings with the goal of facilitating collaboration and friendships across diverse disciplines, research institutions, organizations and other relevant entities. The responsibilities of the Networking Committee are as follows:

- Develop and organize WISAN events to support and celebrate diversity and inclusion of all female and minority scientists within the Nencki Institute, and collaborate with the Public Relations Committee to advertise these events.
- Reach out to the new members of the Nencki Institute community to introduce the WISAN and invite them to participate in WISAN's events, Committees, and other activities.

- Communicate relevant on-campus and off-campus events that support and celebrate a diverse Nencki Institute/Polish Academy of Sciences community and collaborate with the Public Relations Committee to advertise these events.
- Collaborate with other similar organizations to facilitate networking opportunities for female and minority scientists in the WISAN community and beyond.
- Maintain a strong relationship with the management of the Nencki Institute, including sustaining a productive dialogue and representing female and minority scientists' needs.
- Create and maintain a list of the current and past partner organizations including contact point information and curate relationships with their representatives.

4.7 Professional Development Committee

The role of the Professional Development Committee is to organize career events, seminars, and workshops with the goal of preparing female and minority scientists for careers both inside and outside of Academia and providing them with mentorship communities. The responsibilities of the Professional Development Committee are as follows:

- Develop and organize WISAN events focused on career development and mentorship, and collaborate with the Public Relations Committee to advertise these events.
- Ensure that female and minority scientists of the WISAN Community are aware of the opportunities and events hosted by other on- and off-campus organizations related to professional development.
- Collaborate with other similar organizations to facilitate professional development and mentorship opportunities for female and minority scientists in the WISAN Community and beyond.
- Compile and maintain a collection of resources to support women's career development.
- Maintain a strong relationship with the Office of PhD Studies/Doctoral School and HR Unit of the Nencki Institute, including sustaining a productive dialogue and representing female scientists' needs.

4.8 WISAN Advisory Board

The WISAN Advisory Board comprises all former Council Members who want to stay engaged and informed of the developments at the WISAN and who want to help in shaping the organization. To be on the Advisory Board, former WISAN members shall provide the WISAN Secretary with their current email addresses. The Advisory Board has an advising role to the current WISAN Council without any executive responsibilities. The WISAN Council shall provide the Advisory Board with an annual report regarding the developments of the WISAN.

5. Meetings

The WISAN meetings shall be divided into four (4) types of meetings: General meetings, Individual Committee meetings, Executive Council meetings, and Bylaws meetings.

The **WISAN General Meetings** shall be open to all members of the WISAN Community and interested parties, including WISAN's Council and Committee Members. They shall be held at least every three (3) months upon previous agreement on date and time, unless prevented by extraordinary circumstances as decided by the WISAN Council. The location and agenda of the General Meetings shall be determined by the WISAN Council. Preparation of the General Meetings agendas will be overseen by the Secretary. The General Meetings will be scheduled and organized by the Speaker under the supervision of the Secretary. The Council Members shall make an effort to encourage members of their respective WISAN Committees to attend and take an active part in the General Meetings.

Individual Committee Meetings shall be held either as needed or at the request of a given Committee Chair.

The **WISAN Executive Council Meetings** shall be held once every four (4) months to discuss upcoming events, activities, and partnerships with other organizations. Executive Council Meetings will be scheduled and organized by the Speaker under supervision of the Secretary. The meetings shall be attended by at least half (50%) of the WISAN Council, as well as any guests that the Council deems appropriate to invite.

The **WISAN Bylaws Meetings** shall be held once a year, in September or October, to review and amend the Mission and the Bylaws of the WISAN. Only the Council Members shall attend the meetings, which will be scheduled and organized by the Speaker under supervision of the Secretary and attended by at least one of the Chairs of each of the WISAN Committees (if applicable, presence of both Chairs is strongly encouraged), the Secretary and the Speaker.

Council Members shall propose changes or amendments to the WISAN Mission Statement and/or the WISAN Bylaws and the WISAN Secretary shall collect and compile these changes or amendments and distribute among the WISAN Council Members at least seven (7) days before the WISAN Bylaws Meeting. The amendments shall be affirmed through a formal open vote by the Council Members. Absolute majority is required for the vote to pass.

Additional meetings shall be held either as needed or at the request of the WISAN Members and shall be attended by the Council Members and the interested WISAN Members.

6. Elections

The elected positions of the WISAN shall be the WISAN Council Members, that is the Secretary, the Speaker and the WISAN Committee Chairs.

6.1 The Committee Chairs

The WISAN Council Members shall announce the open position at least one (1) General Meeting before that position should be filled. The WISAN Council Members shall run the election proceedings at latest one (1) month before the current Council Member is due to step down. If advance announcement of the open position is impossible due to unforeseen circumstances, the WISAN Council Members shall announce the vacancy no later than seven (7) days after learning of its existence, and elections shall be held at a time jointly decided by the WISAN Council but no later than one (1) month after the vacancy arises.

The announcement of an open position shall be made public on the WISAN webpage, social media, and other appropriate communication channels and shall further be delivered to all Council Members and WISAN Committee Members, preferably in the form of an email.

Any person wishing to fill an open position shall express their interest no later than fourteen (14) days after the vacancy has been announced. They shall do so in a formally written letter delivered to the WISAN Council, preferably by email.

Each WISAN Council Member has the right to vote and may do so by supporting one (1) candidate by formally written or electronic vote in elections organized by the WISAN Council, as overseen by the Secretary. Elections take the form of a secret ballot. They may be held either during an Executive Council Meeting or via the internet assuming the condition of the secret ballot is met. Simple majority (more than 50% of the votes) shall decide which candidate wins the election. In the case of a tie, the candidate with the most seniority, as defined by attendance at their first General Meeting, will automatically be elected.

Every WISAN Member is eligible to serve as a WISAN Committee Chair provided that they intend, to the best of their knowledge, to remain a WISAN Member for the entire duration of their term, which is 12 months. If necessary, the length of the term may exceed 12 months until a new Member has been elected.

6.2 The Secretary and the Speaker

The positions of Secretary and Speaker shall be filled in accordance with the rules concerning elections of the Committee Chairs with the following exceptions. If no candidate has a majority after the first round of voting, there will be a runoff between the top candidates until a majority is reached. Members eligible for the Secretary and the Speaker positions are those that have at least one (1) year of participation in the WISAN with greater than 50% attendance at the General Meetings.