

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HRS4R - HR AWARD

Institute of Biophysics, Czech Academy
of Sciences

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1. Introduction

Institute of Biophysics, CAS has received the HR Excellence in Research Award by the European Commission in November 2021. The new Action Plan of employee care strategy has been implemented since the next year. In March 2023 a survey has been conducted with the aim to find out the impact of the first year of HR Award Action Plan implementation. The goal of this survey was also to identify future priority areas and improve the new Action Plan for the next 3 years.

2. Methodology

The questionnaire survey has been prepared by Working Group and all employees of the Institute has been invited to participate in the survey. The survey was anonymous and prepared in both Czech and English versions.

The survey consisted of 53 questions related mainly to the running Action Plan. The answers could be „Yes“, „No“, „I do not know“ (NK) and „I am not interested“ (NI).

The employees filled in their position: R1-R4, not related to research (NR), student (S), further gender characteristic: Female, Male, Not specified and how long are they working at the Institute: up to 2 years, 2-10 years and over 10 years.

We have received filled questionnaire from 99 respondents from the total number of cca 200 employees (e.i. cca 50% of employees).

3. Characteristics of Respondents

3.1 Position

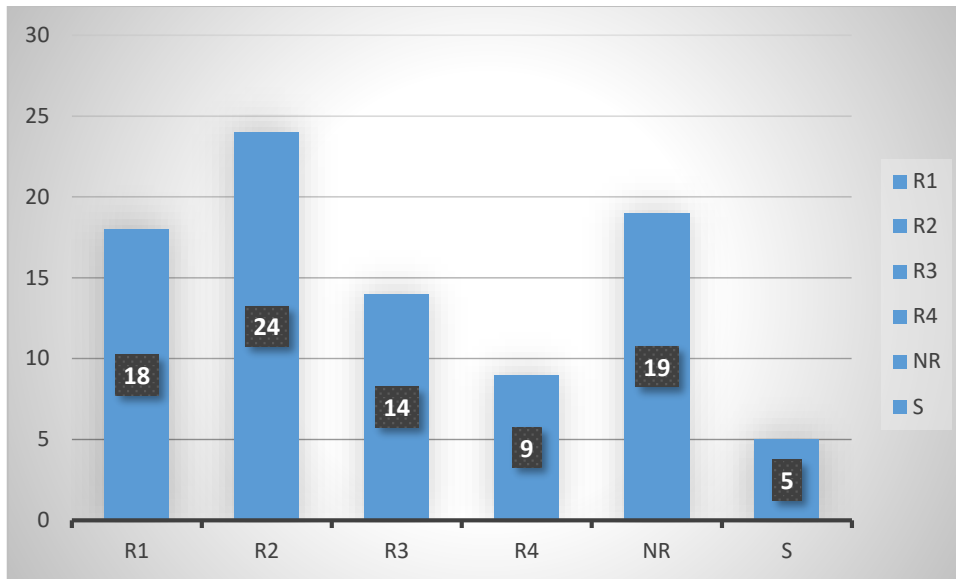


Fig. 1. Structure of respondents according to their position (NR – not research worker, S – magister student, the R1 category involved Ph.D. students)

The total number of respondents with identified position was 89. R1 category represented 20% of respondents, R2 - 27%, R3 - 16%, R4 - 10%, and non-research workers represented 21% of respondents.

3.2 Gender

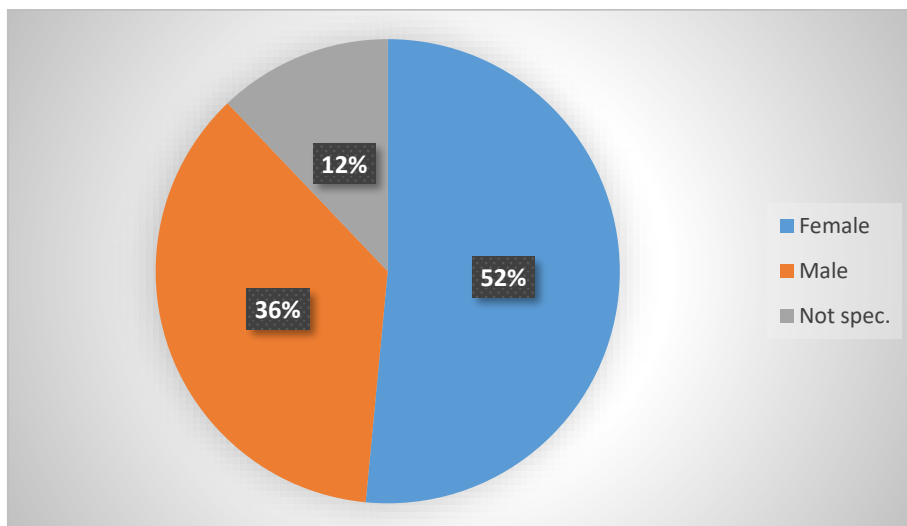


Fig. 2. Gender distribution according to the survey

In 53% of cases the respondents were women, 36% men and in 12% gender was not specified. It is interesting to combine positions and gender. For R1 position we have 12 women, 4 men and 2 NS (not specified) workers, for R2 it is 17 women, 8 men and 2 NS, for R3 it is 5 women, 8 men and 1 NS and for R4 we have 1 woman and 8 men in leading positions. For non-research positions we have 11 women, 5 men and 3 NS workers.

3.3 How long do our respondents work at the Institute

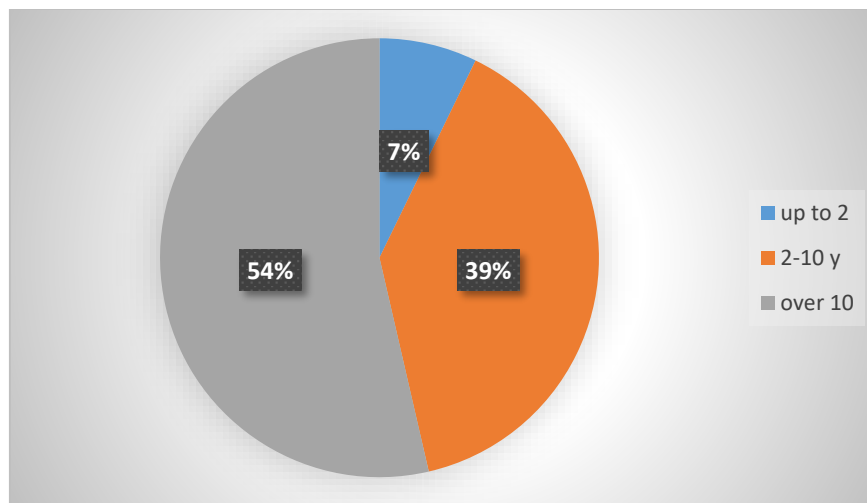


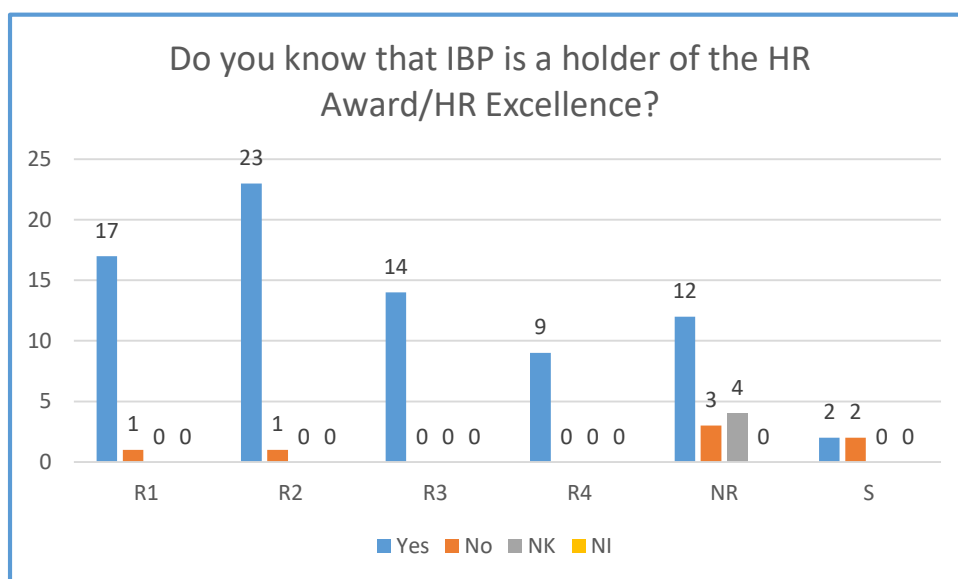
Fig. 3. Distribution of respondents according to the length of work at our Institute

54% of employees who completed the survey work at our Institute for 10 years or longer, 39% work 2-10 years and only 7% work up to 2 years. There is no strong correlation with gender, however, there is correlation with positions. All R4 employees work at the Institute for over 10 years, also 12/14 R3 employees work over 10 years (2 of them work for 2-10 years). There is no strong correlation for the other categories.

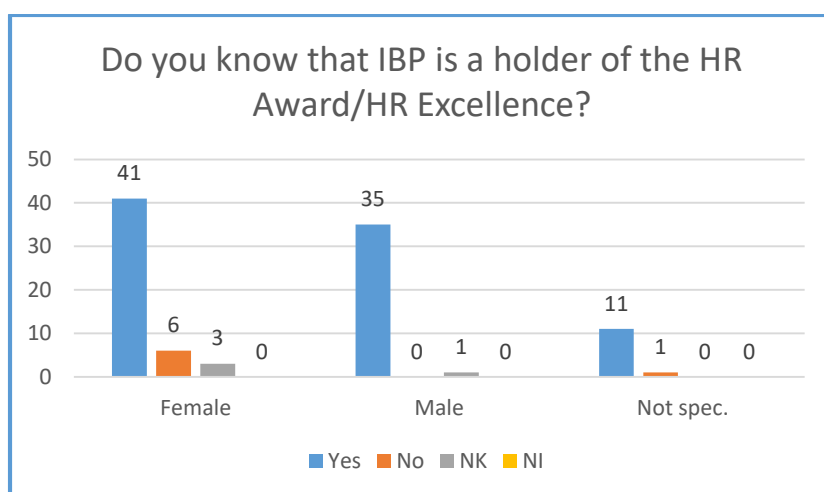
4. Results

4.1 Evaluation of the proces of HR Award as a whole

Our activities which started with HR Award should substantially influenced recruitment of employees, their carieer and working conditions in the Institute. Let us have a look at the answers of the questionnaire. The question „**Do you know that IBP is a holder of the HR Award/HR Excellence?** „ answered 88% respondents „Yes“. In 12 cases who responded „No“ or „I do not know“ there are 7 non-research workers and 2 students. It can be easily seen from the following histogram.

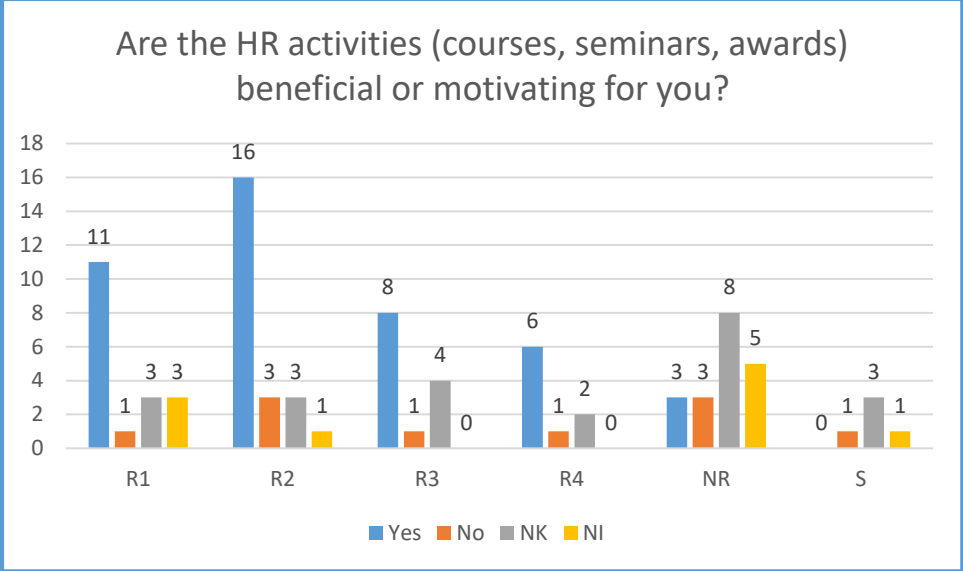


Negative answer is also correlated with gender – women are obiously less informed about HR Award.

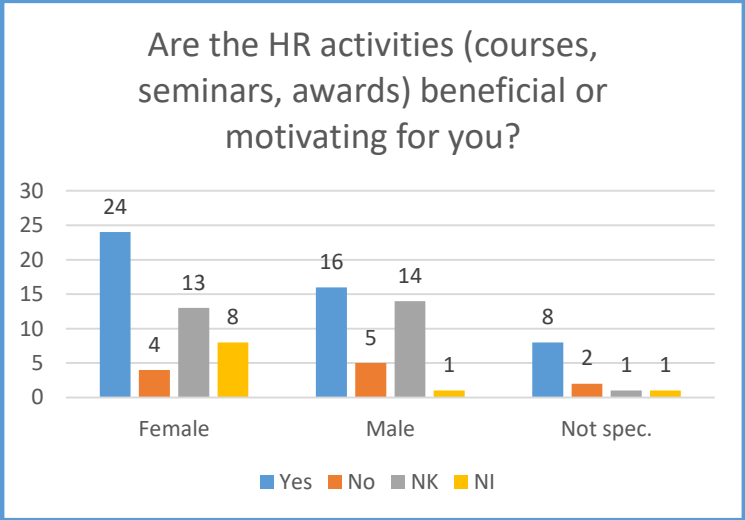


The evaluation of the proces of HR Award as a whole can be better seen from the question: „**Are the HR activities (courses, seminars, awards) beneficial or**

motivating for you? „ With the exception of non-research respondents and students in all research cathegories the activities related to HR Award were beneficial or motivating:

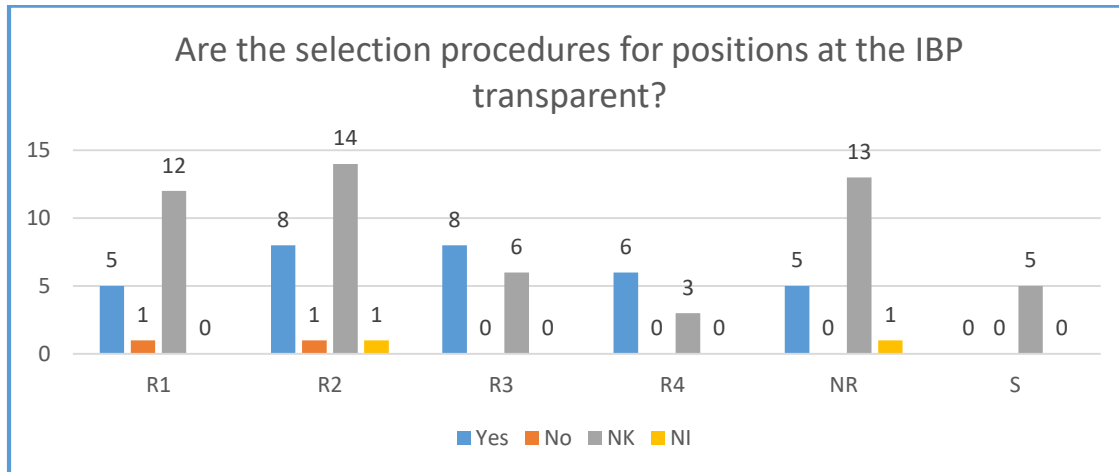


Also gener does not influence the conclusion that the activities of HR Award are beneficial or motivating for our employees (see the next figure).

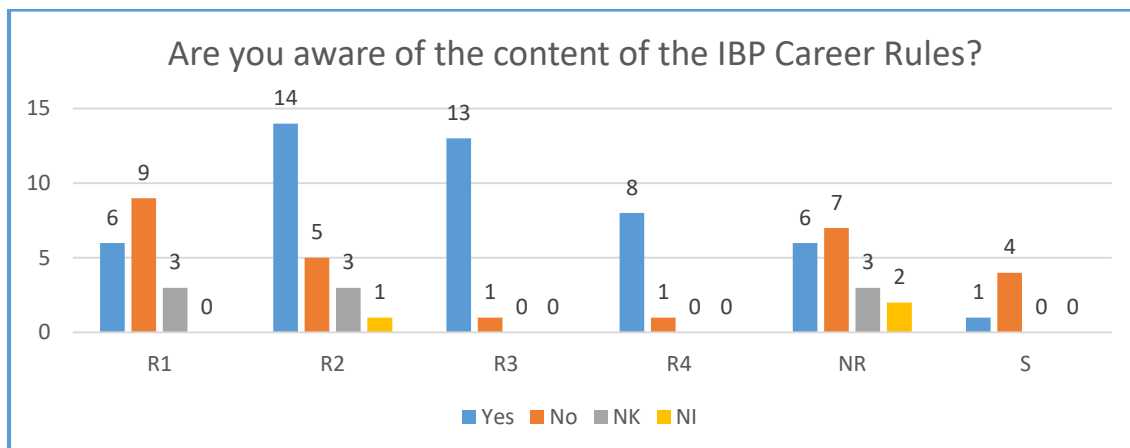


4.2 The selection procedures for new positions at the Institute and Career Rules

The answer to the question: **„Are the selection procedures for positions at the IBP transparent?“** was mostly positive, however, more respondents answered „I do not know“. It means that most employees are not acquainted with the selection procedure; those who can decide preferably select „Yes“ only with minor exceptions (only in 2 cases „No“).



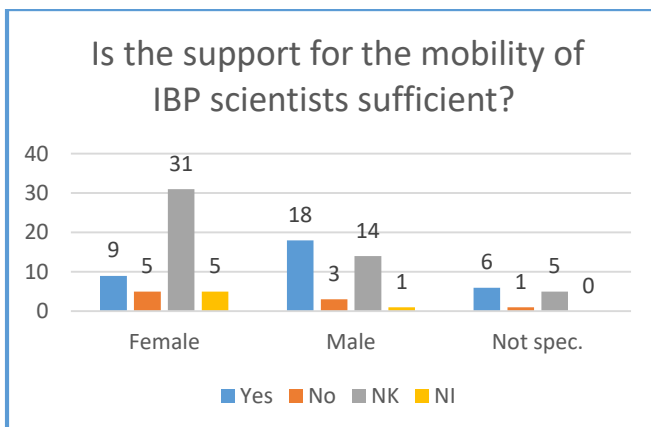
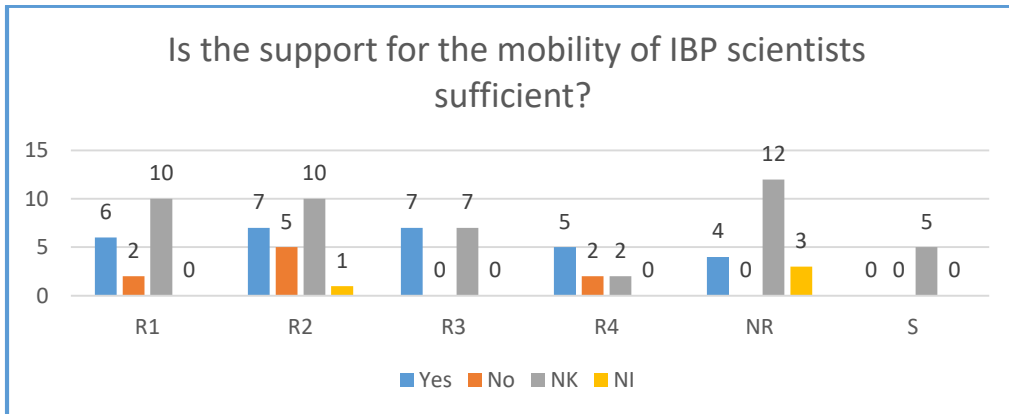
Related question: **„Are you aware of the content of the IBP Career Rules?“** showed that the awareness of the Career Rules increases with higher position (similar regularity can be seen above):



We can conclude that the improved selection procedure for new positions is well accepted as transparent, however, a number of employees are not acquainted with it as well as with Career Rules.

4.3 The support of mobility at the Institute

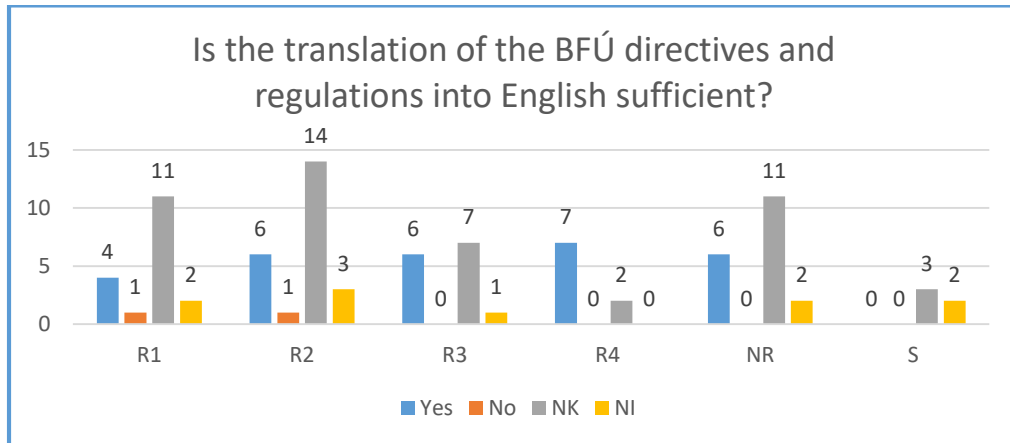
The support of mobility has been focused mainly to Ph.D. students who travel abroad using university support. A new regulation has been introduced which supplements such stays (over 30 days) with institute support. According to the questionnaire this support is sufficient only for a part of employees, more for men than for women.



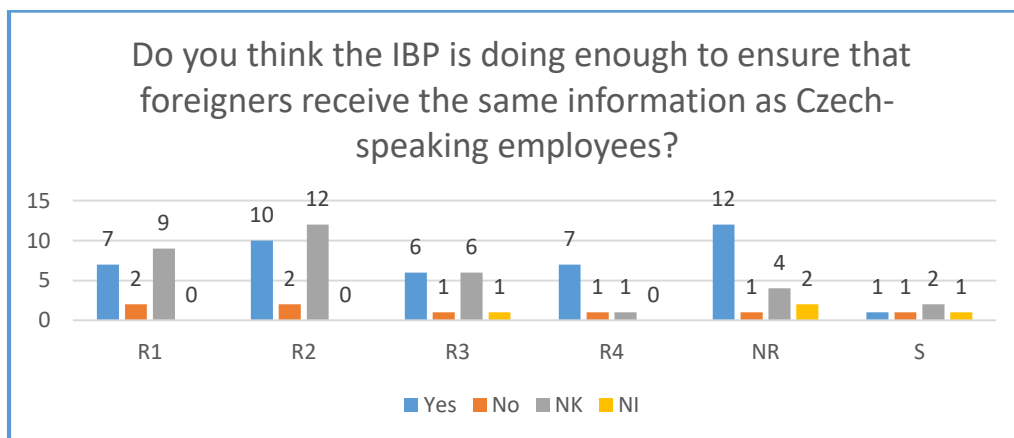
The support of mobility has been fully established this year and we have to wait some time to determined definitively whether it is sufficient.

4.4 Is the Institute doing enough to ensure equal conditions for foreign employees?

Is the translation of the BFÚ directives and regulations into English sufficient? All new directives and regulations are simultaneously translated into English. From the older regulations only some specific that are not important for foreign employees remain in Czech language. From the questionnaire we can see only 2 negative answers (from 99), which can be accidental.



Similar question: “ **Do you think the IBP is doing enough to ensure that foreigners receive the same information as Czech-speaking employees?**” has been also positively answered:

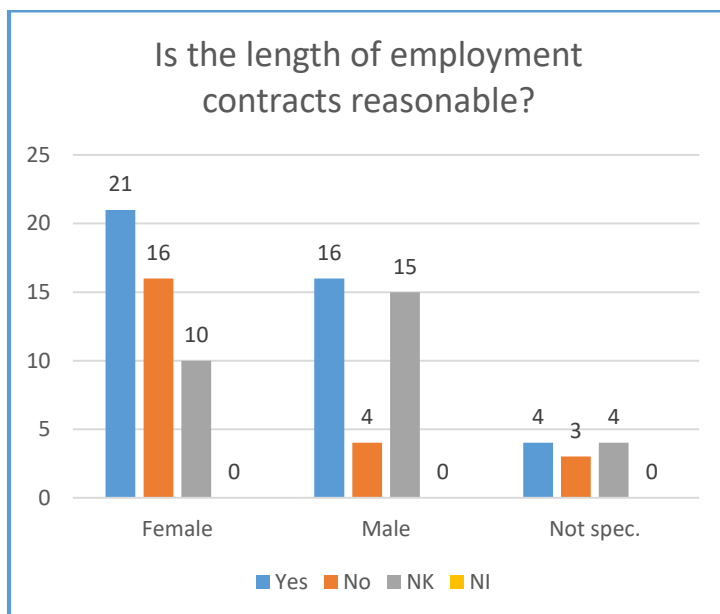


The conditions for foreign employees are basically equal to Czech workers. The problem is social inequality among EU countries where the salaries differ significantly.

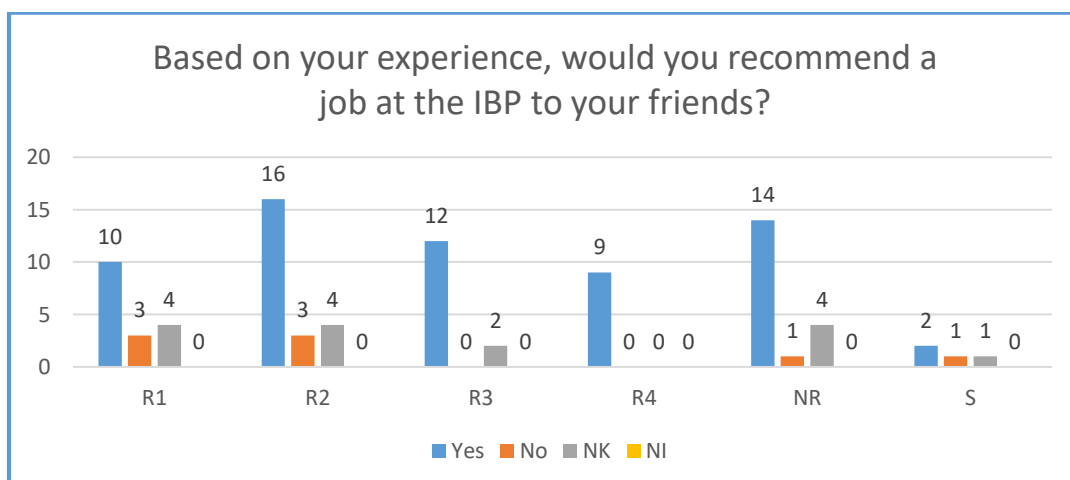
4.5 Is the Institute a pleasant working place?

The question „Do you perceive the environment of the institute positively, such as the garden, common room, lecture rooms?“ has been answered „Yes“ in ALL CASES. Similar questions such as „Do you rate other employee benefits, such as the annual distribution of vitamins, positively? or „Do you perceive contributions to recreation and lunches from the social fund as a significant employee benefit?“ have been answered „Yes“ in the vast majority of cases. Also sports and other leisure activities organized at the work place are seen positively. Majority of respondents also consider social policy of the Institute adequate.

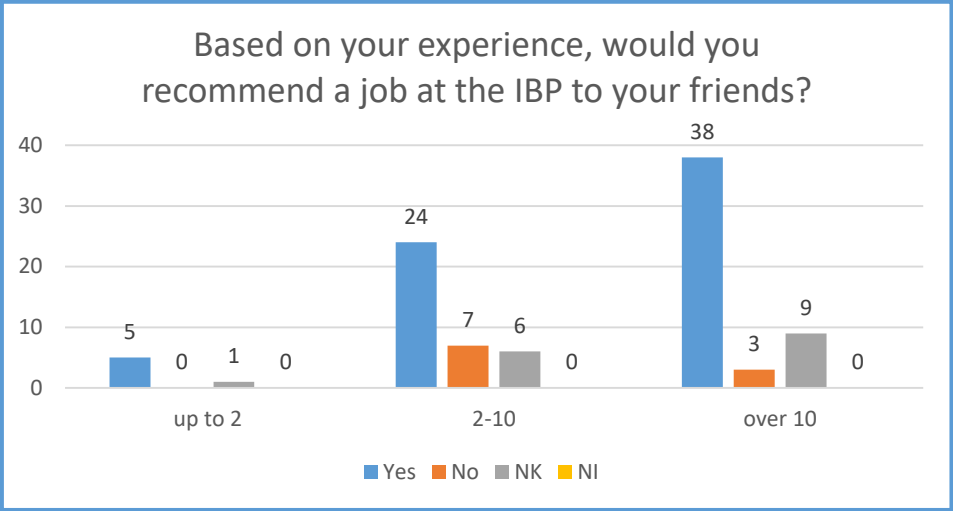
The employment contracts are considered reasonable for approximately 50% of employees, for all positions, more for women, far less for men.



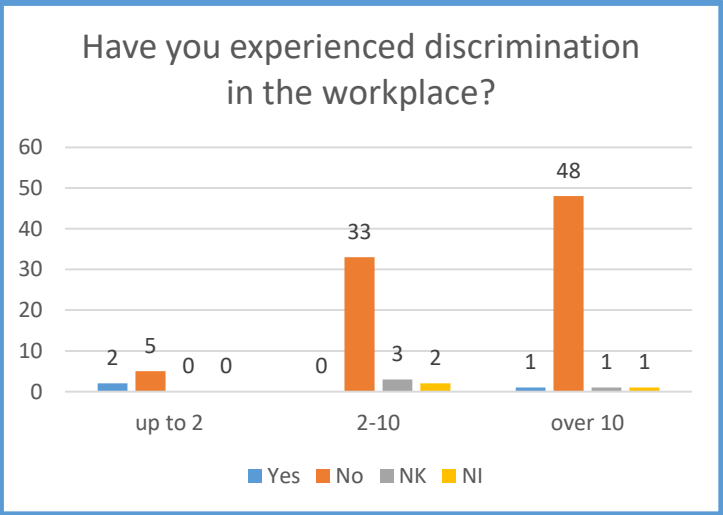
The working place is considered „safe“ practically for all employees. The vast majority of workers would recommend a job at the Institute to his friends:



Even those working here for a long time consider the Institute to be a good working place:



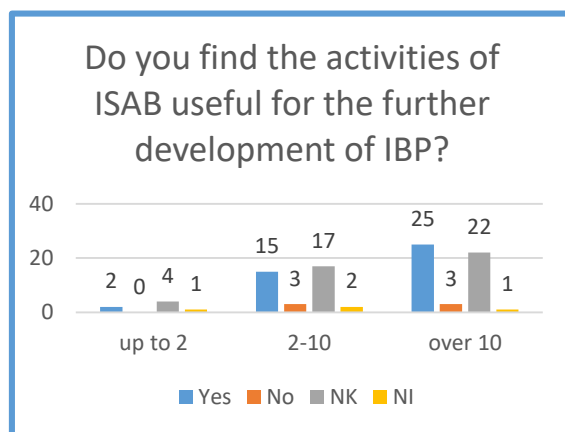
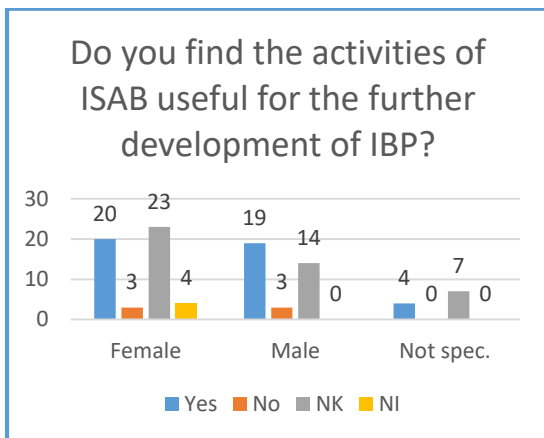
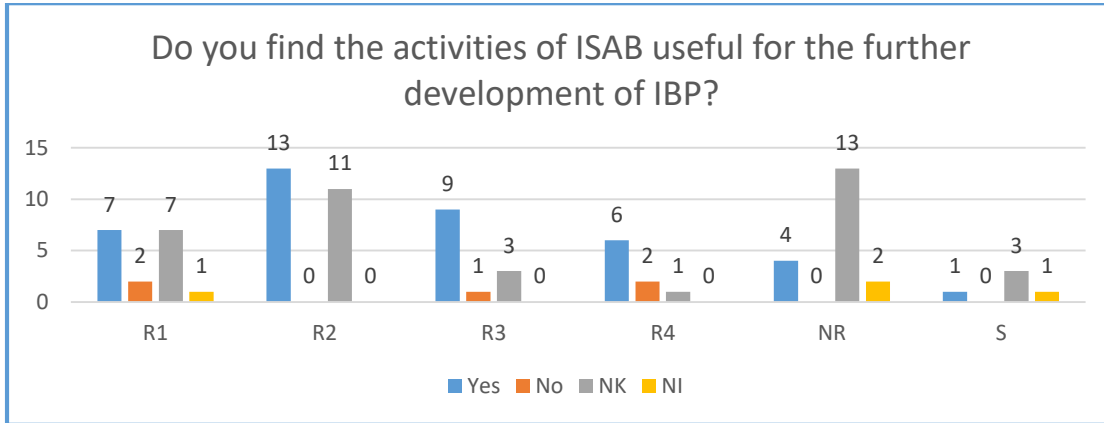
Related question? „Have you experienced discrimination in the workplace? „ is answered „No“:



Some exceptions are 2 workers being here for a short time (females).

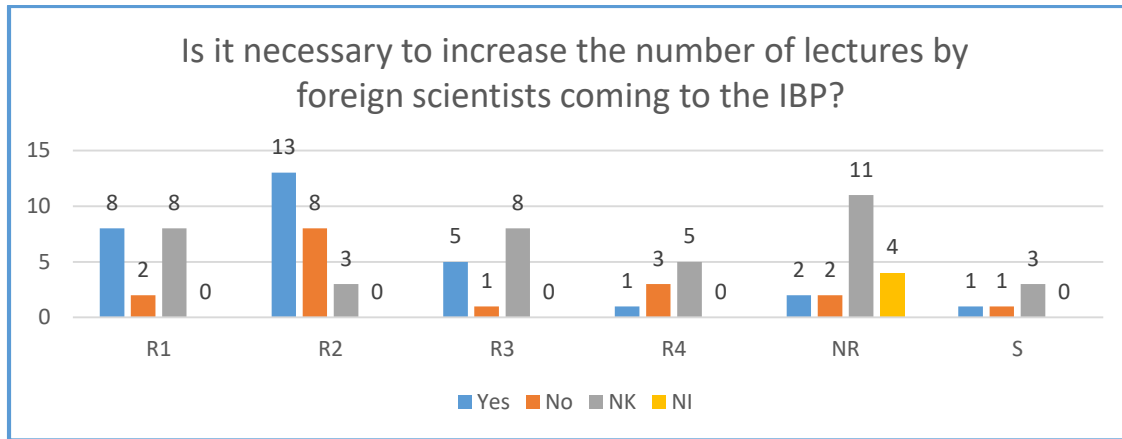
4.6 The role of the ISAB

The role of ISAB is in vast majority of cases considered positive. The question: „Do you find the activities of ISAB useful for the further development of IBP?“ is answered mostly „Yes“ independently of the position, gender or length of work at IBP.



4.7 The number of lectures by foreign scientists at the IBP.

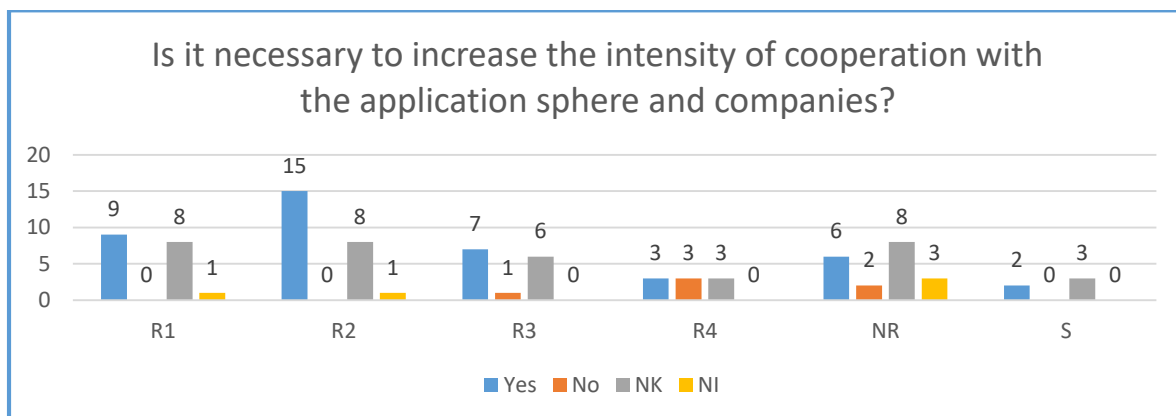
There is still demand for interesting high-quality lectures mainly from foreign speakers at the Institute. The question: „Is it necessary to increase the number of lectures by foreign scientists coming to the IBP?“ is mostly answered „Yes“:



An exception represent R4 workers who are mostly department leaders and are themselves very experienced and non-researchers.

4.8 Cooperation with the application sphere.

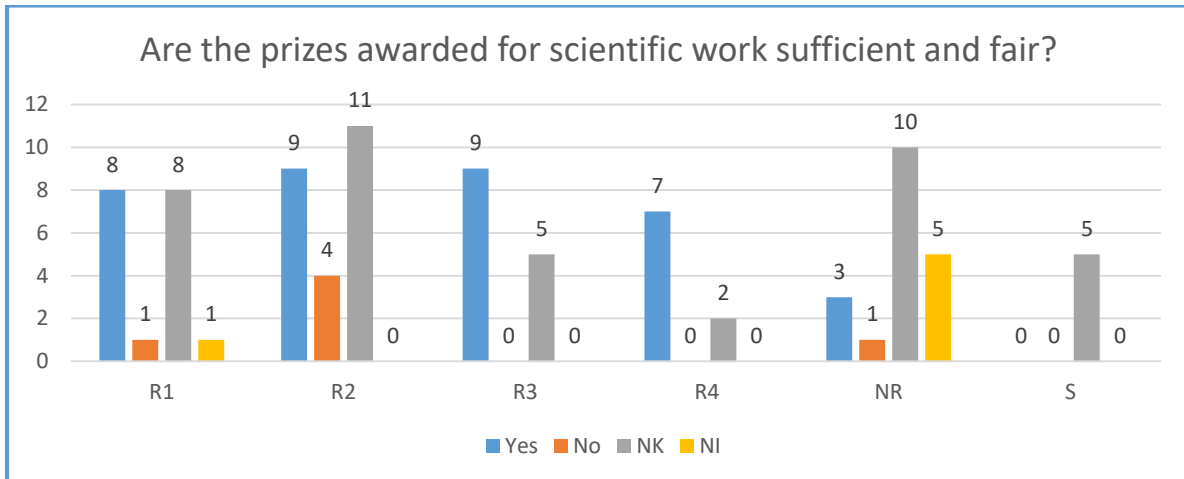
In vast majority of responders there is feeling that the Institute should increase cooperation with the application sphere:



It is interesting to note that R4 workers (mostly leaders of departments) do not share such feeling. In 3 cases they are even against such cooperation probably focusing to purely fundamental research.

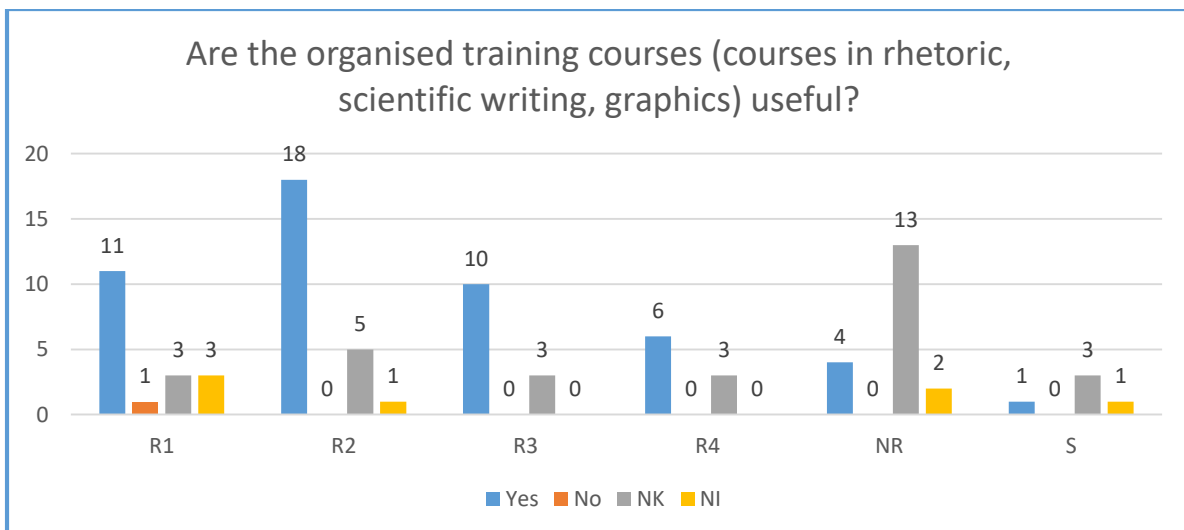
4.9 Prizes awarded for scientific work.

For some specific questions related to new activities such as „**Are the prizes awarded for scientific work sufficient and fair?**“, the researchers (R1-R4) answered mostly „Yes“ (with small exceptions only). Of course, non-research workers mostly do not know answer to this question. The answer is positive for both women and men.



4.10 Courses organized in the frame of HR Award.

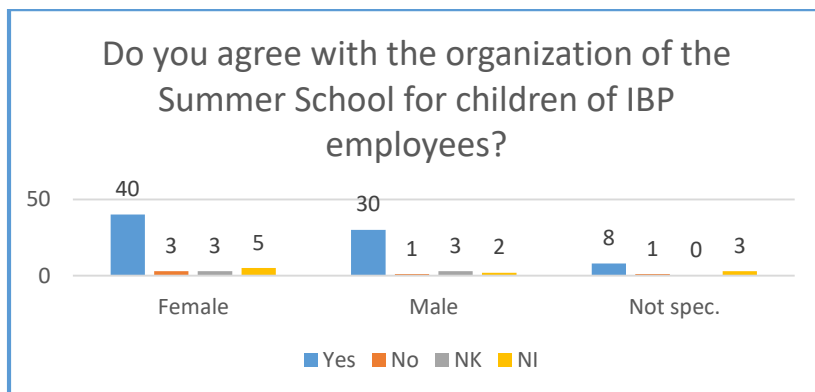
The question: „Are the organised training courses (courses in rhetoric, scientific writing, graphics) useful?“ is answered mostly „Yes“ (with exception of non-research workers):



The answer is mostly positive independently of the gender or length of stay at the IBP.

4.11 Summer schools for children.

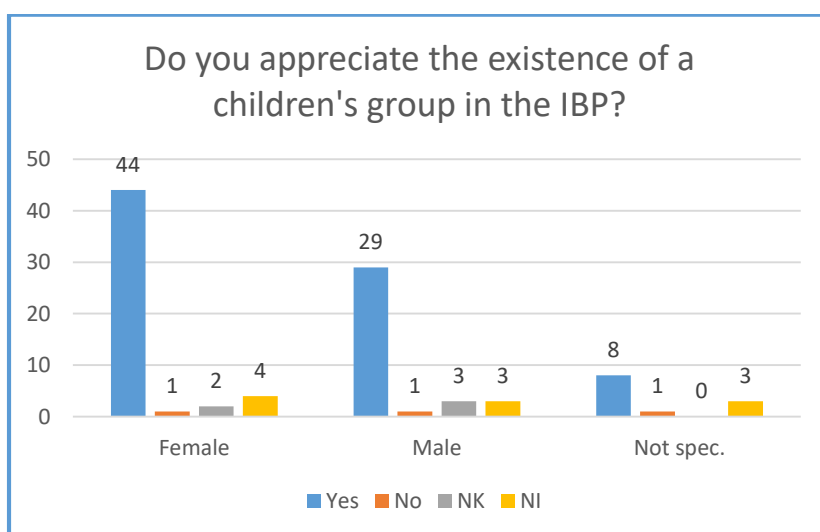
We have organized 2 summer schools for children, each for one week involving discussions with parents. We involved also a question: „**Do you agree with the organization of the Summer School for children of IBP employees?**” The answer was in vast majority of cases „Yes” independently of position, gender or length of work at IBP.



Interestingly, in 3 cases women do not agree with such schools. Related question: „**Do you agree with the organization of the Children's Day at BFÚ?**” has been answered also very positively for all positions, independently of gender or length of stay at IBP.

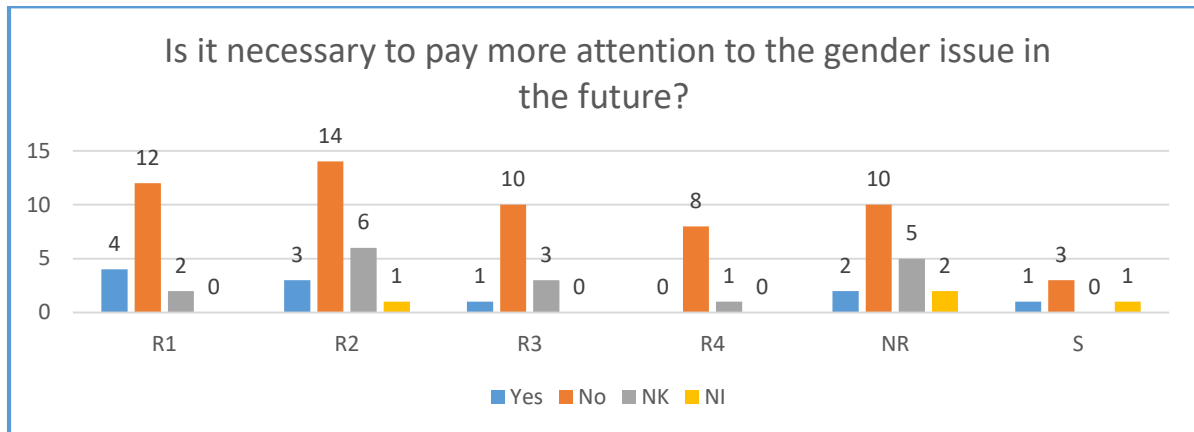
4.12 Children's group in the IBP.

The children's group has been functioning for the whole time we have the HR Award and permanently used. Employees appreciate the possibility to use this group and continue with their work.

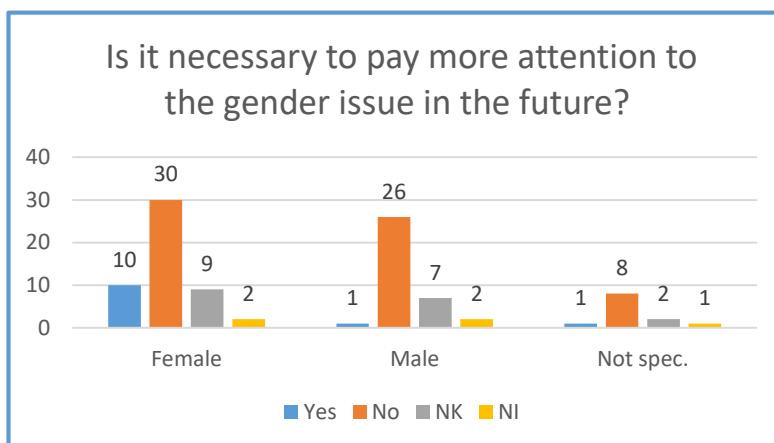


4.13 Gender issues

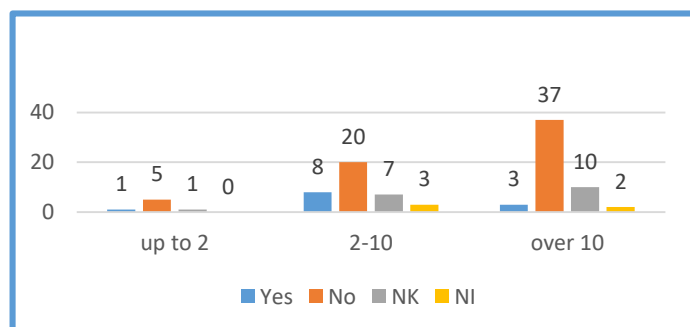
Gender issues are broadly discussed in the society. Owing to the conditions of grant applications involving Gender Equality Plan (GEP) to successfully apply, we have developed GEP in our Institute, too. However, in most cases the answer to the question: „**Is it necessary to pay more attention to the gender issue in the future?** „ is „No“ for all positions.



More detailed analysis shows that approximately 25% of women would appreciate more attention to the gender issues:



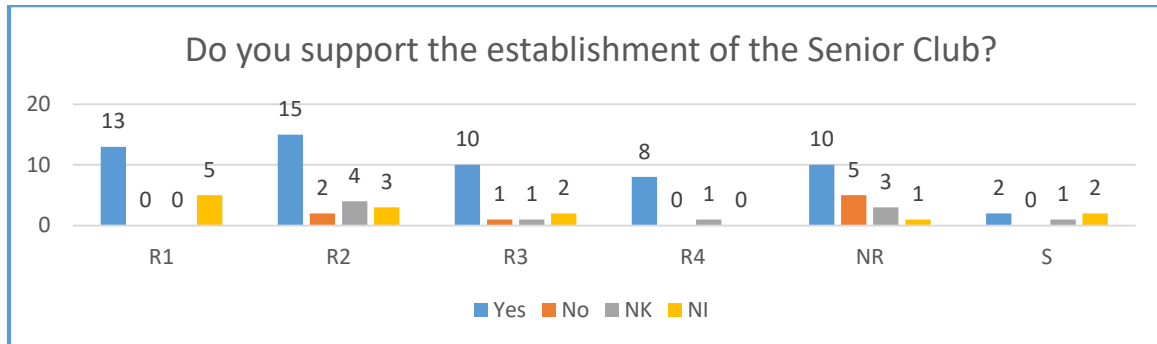
In addition, negative answer is more frequent for employees working at the IBP over 10 years (e.i. for older people). In the range 2-10 years a large proportion of employees expect more attention to gender issues.



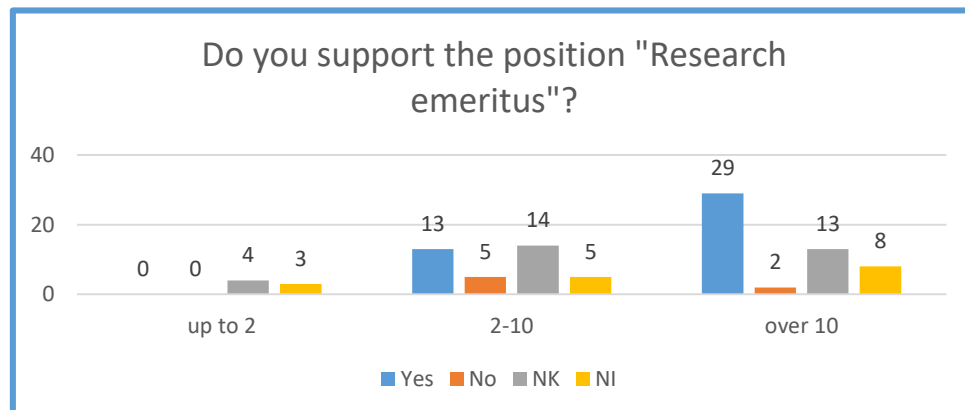
Therefore, we have organized courses on gender issues in 2022 and we will continue to organize activities according to our GEP.

4.14 Social activities

In tight relation to gender issues are other social activities focused to equal treatment of different social groups. Obviously, such activities are supported in our Institute. Vast majority of respondents support, for example, the establishment of the Senior Club:

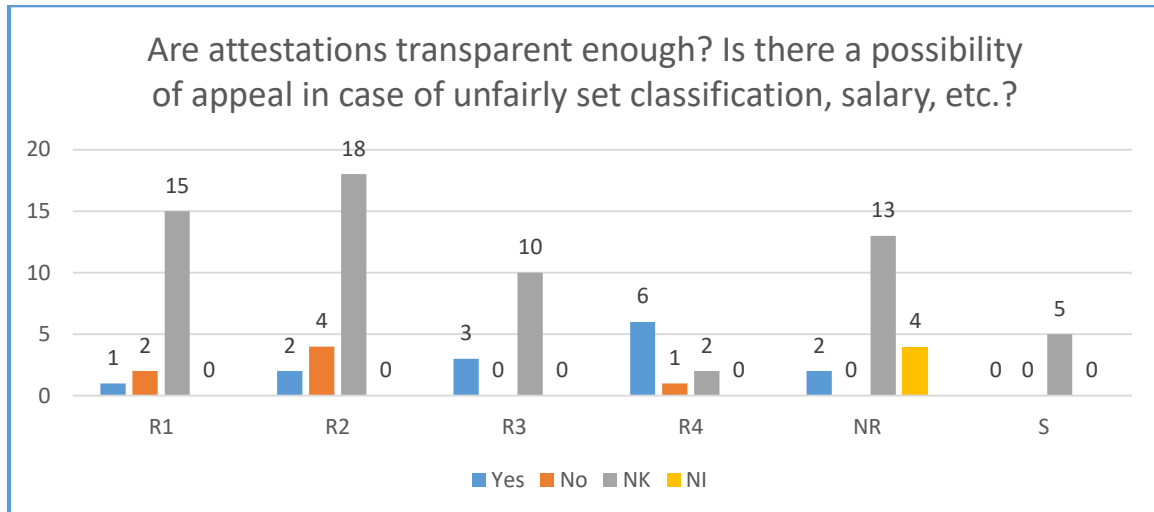


Also the position „Research emeritus“ is widely supported independently of the position (with the exception of non-researchers and students), independently of the gender but with growing positive attitude for longer working employees:



4.15 Attestations

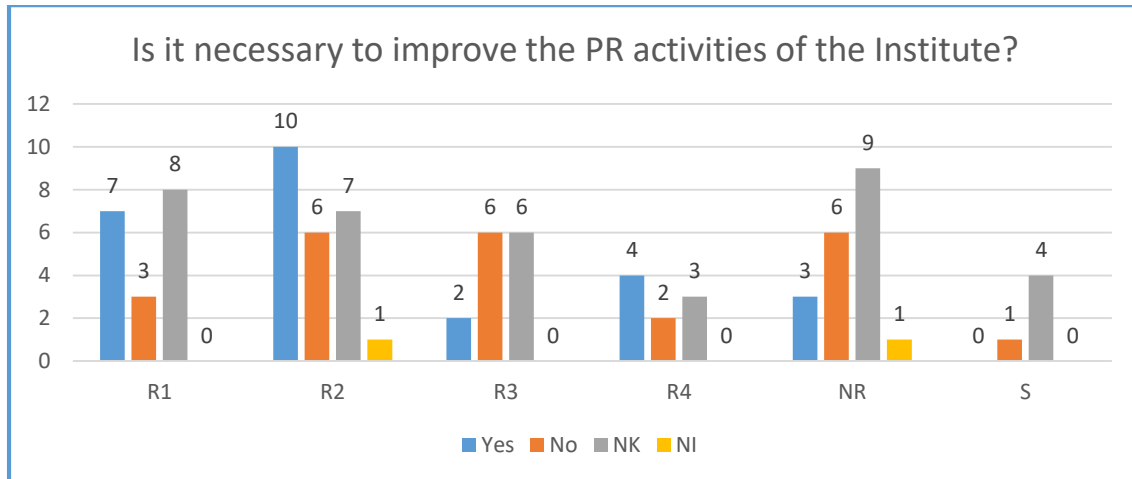
Attestations are realized by special commission in part per rollam, however, mainly at the end of each year. The question: „Are attestations transparent enough? Is there a possibility of appeal in case of unfairly set classification, salary, etc.?” is in vast majority of cases answered „I do not know“:



Only for R4 employees (mostly department leaders) there is „Yes“, which reflects the fact that classification, salary, etc of the employees is suggested by the department leaders and agreed (explained) with the employees. In fact, there is a possibility of appeal, which is not usually used. Therefore, the Action 6 „An improvement of attestation rules“ will continue.

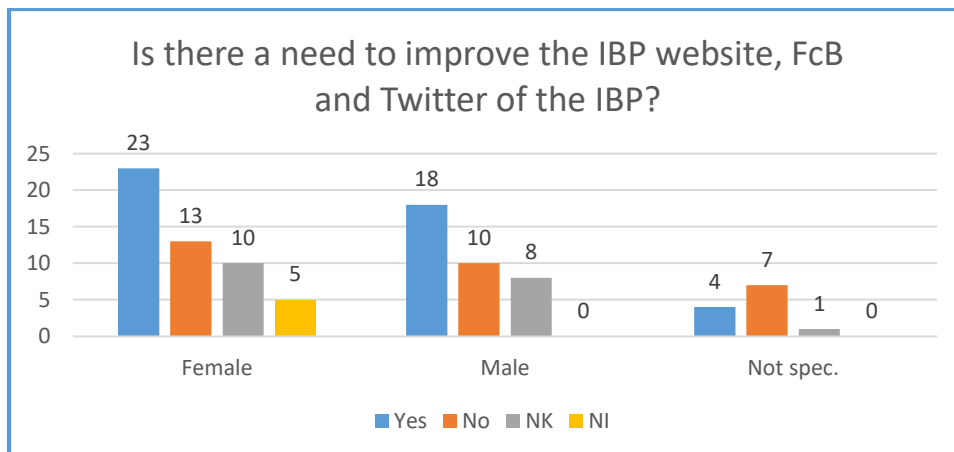
4.16 PR activities

There are many PR activities realized in the last year (see Action 11). Therefore, it is interesting to know whether it is appreciated by the respondents. The question: „Is it necessary to improve the PR activities of the Institute?“ was answered in 50% „Yes“ and in 50% „No“. It does not depend on the gender. More employees working over 10 years answered „No“.



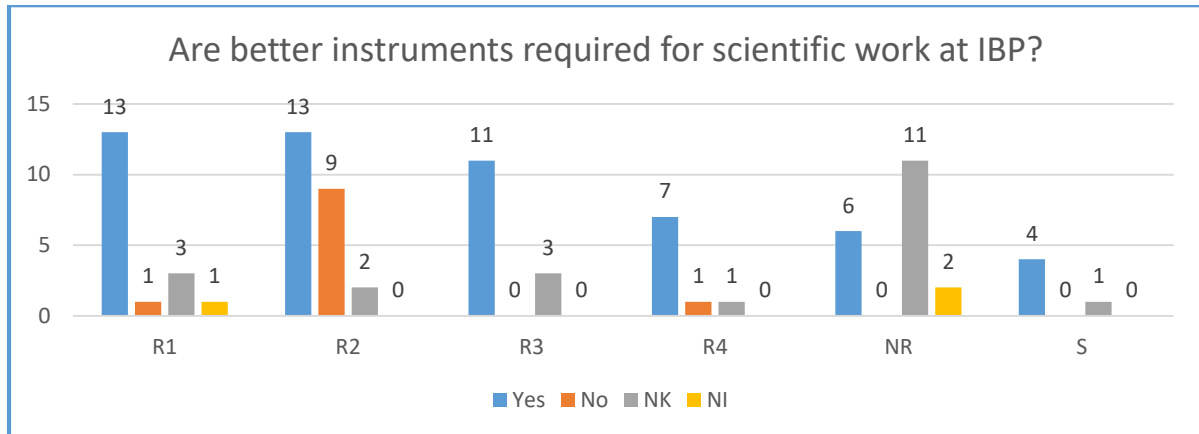
Obviously the extent of these activities seems sufficient for a half of workers.

Related question: „**Is there a need to improve the IBP website, FcB and Twitter of the IBP?**“ is answered mostly positively, however, there is quite a big compartment of employees that are satisfied with the current state (more in the case of women or with not specified gender).



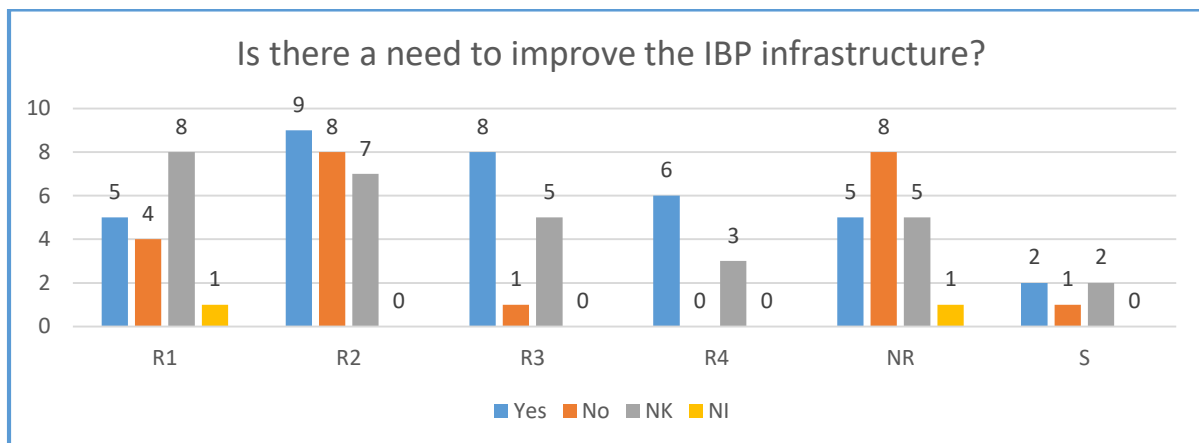
4.17 Institute infrastructure and equipment

Research workers and their work outputs depend strongly on the quality of infrastructure and equipment of the Institute. It can be illustrated by the question: „**Are better instruments required for scientific work at IBP?**“, which is answered in most cases „Yes“ although for some categories (R2) this question is not so important.



Very similar responses have been obtained to the question: „**Is it necessary to improve the equipment of laboratories and offices of the Institute of Biophysics?**“

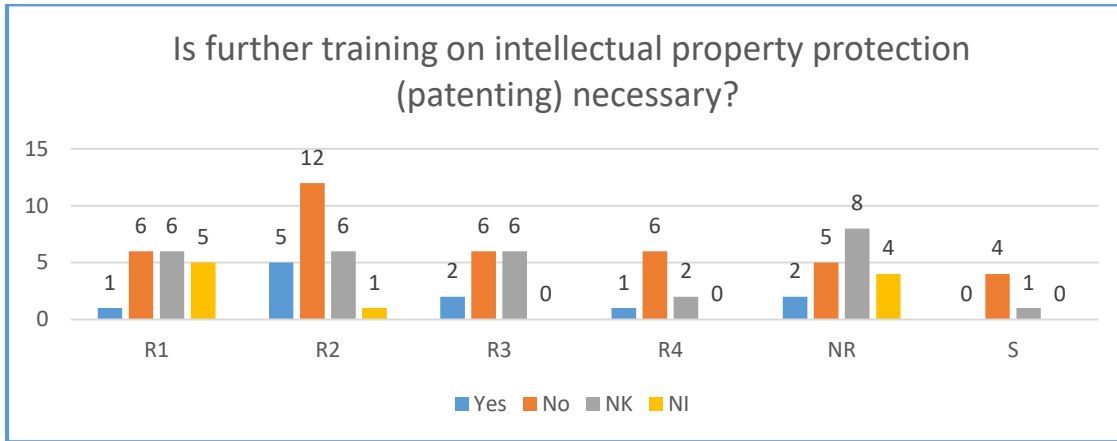
Related questions about improvement of the IBP infrastructure lead to similar answers, particularly, research workers R3-R4 required improvement.



On the other hand, the question: „**Is it necessary to build new laboratories in the IBP?**“ has been answered positively only for R4 category in 4 cases, in 5 cases the answer was „I do not know“. All other categories of workers answered positively in half of cases or even answered more frequently „No“.

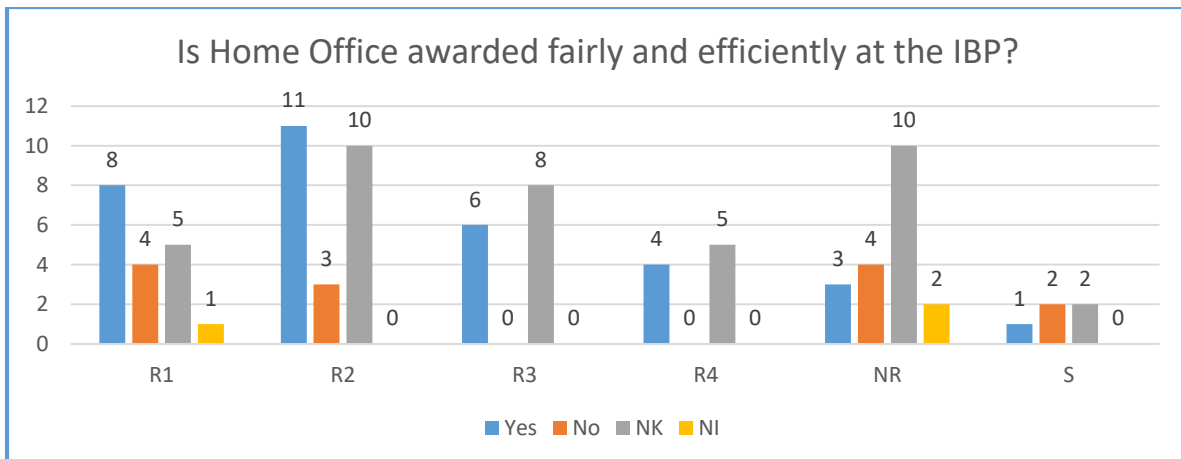
4.18 Intellectual property protection

Training on intellectual property protection is obviously required for applied research, to lower extent for fundamental research. Obviously this question is not so important for our Institute focus entirely to basic research.



4.19 Home office

Working from home represents an important issue in the society. The management of the Institute has to evaluate its possibilities and effectiveness. The question: „**Is Home Office awarded fairly and efficiently at the IBP?**“ was answered in majority of cases positively or „I do not know“.



5 Suggestions and comments related to personnel processes

Respondents were invited to suggest any idea how to improve the personnel processes (related to professional growth, communication, great flexibility in the area of part-time work or possibility of working from home).

The following suggestions were mentioned:

- a) Increase the duration of the employment contract
- b) Exchange back the food vending machine and canteen
- c) Introduce personal development courses not only for scientists
- d) Better quality of food
- e) Fresh fruit would be better than vitamins
- f) Insufficient salaries
- g) Extension of educational courses
- h) Inform in advance about the termination of the employment contract
- i) The whole institution should be a team
- j) The prizes are not awarded transparently
- k) Designate a worker who will solve their forms with foreigners
- l) Attendance forms are not suitable for part-time workers (there are not hours for a given day).