

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Germany

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH

Legal framework

Besides the general legal provisions on gender equality that exist at federal and Länder level, there are specific legal provisions on gender equality in the area of public research.

Paragraph 3 of the Framework Act for Higher Education (Hochschulrahmengesetz, HRG) of 2007 obliges universities to promote gender equality and to strive towards the elimination of existing inequalities. Compliance with this provision is listed among the criteria for granting public funding to universities (Hochschulrahmengesetz, §5). Furthermore, the Framework Act for Higher Education features an obligation to evaluate the universities' compliance with their gender equality-related obligation at regular intervals (Hochschulrahmengesetz, §6). The Framework Act for Higher Education also states that universities have to strive towards an "appropriate" representation of women and men in university bodies (Hochschulrahmengesetz, §37(2)).

The higher education acts in all German Länder feature a legal obligation of universities to work towards the elimination of gender-based discrimination. Some provisions are more comprehensive and detailed than others. Most of these acts include the compliance with the gender equality provision as a criterion for funding. All Länder acts feature similar, more or less specific provisions like those mentioned in the Framework Act for Higher Education. All higher education acts at Länder level include provisions on equal opportunities commissioners/women's officers; provisions on these officers' duties, rights, election vs. selection procedure, term in office and infrastructure differ between the Länder. The higher education acts of all Länder oblige universities to issue gender equality plans; the denominations of these plans and their characteristics differ across the Länder.

The Federal Equality Law (Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz) provides a set of rules with regard to the equal opportunities commissioners in federal agencies and applies to non-university public research institutions (Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz, §19-36). A provision of the Federal Equality Law obliges non-university public research institutions to issue a gender equality plan (Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz, §11).

The higher education act of the German Land North Rhine-Westphalia (Hochschulzukunftsgesetz) of 2014 made the application of the 'cascade mode' obligatory in order to set up targets for the recruitment of female professors (Article 1, § 37a HZG NRW).

Policy framework

In the Implementation Agreement on the Joint Science Conference (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz, GWK) Agreement on the Equality of Women and Men in Joint Funding Activities for Research issued in 2008, the federal and Länder governments have legally committed themselves to supporting gender equality in their jointly funded research institutions and initiatives, and to work towards the elimination of gender-based discrimination (Ausführungsvereinbarung zum GWK-Abkommen über die Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern bei der gemeinsamen Forschungsförderung, AV-Glei, §1). The Implementation Agreement features concrete provisions on e.g. recruitment procedures, career promotion and gender equality officers. Amongst others, it stipulates that in case there are candidates with equal qualifications, the candidate of the underrepresented sex will be preferred in e.g. in recruitment and promotion procedures (with some exceptions) (AV-Glei, Anlage, §4).

In the Pact for Research and Innovation 2011-2015, the publicly funded research institutions committed themselves to establish concrete targets, following the 'cascade model', to significantly increase the number of female researchers, especially in leading positions, and to consider the use of further incentives and sanctions (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz, 2009, p. 3). One of the most prominent government initiatives aimed to advance gender equality in higher education and research is the Federal Programme for Women Professors ("Professorinnenprogramm"), a joint programme of the federal government and the Länder governments that was launched in 2007 and renewed in 2012. Its approach is twofold: encourage the design and implementation of comprehensive gender equality strategies at German higher education institutions, and increase the number and share of female professors. In the framework of this programme, higher education institutions hand in gender equality concepts, i.e. strategies featuring concrete measures. If a concept is positively assessed, the institution is granted funding for up to three professorships held by women for the course of five years.

Other stimulatory initiatives

In 2008, the General Assembly of the German Research Foundation (DFG) established Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality that consist of 'structural' and 'personal' standards. Compliance with these standards was stipulated as "one of the key criteria for the approval of research networks in which member institutions are applicants" (DFG, 2008). Higher education and research institutions have set up gender equality concepts aimed to achieve compliance with these standards. A core element of the 'personal' standards is the 'cascade model', which implies that the institutions define targets for the proportion of women at each qualification level that must be higher than the proportion of women at the level below. The German Research Foundation has assessed the gender equality concepts (issued in 2009) and the reports on their implementation (provided in 2011 and 2013). Subsequently, it modified its procedures, now focusing on a quantitative assessment of the representation of women and men at different stages of academic careers. In order to support the gender equality-related efforts within the higher education and research institutions, the German Research Foundation has set up a toolbox of gender equality practices in research.

The TOTAL E-QUALITY Award is a well-established certificate that is managed by TOTAL E-QUALITY Deutschland e.V. It is based on a self-assessment instrument. Applicants from higher education institutions are asked to highlight gender equality initiatives in areas of action defined in the instrument (e.g., recruitment, career development, work-life-balance, organisational development) and to provide sex-disaggregated data. Certificates are awarded once a year.

The National Pact for Women in MINT Careers (MINT stands for mathematics, informatics, natural sciences and technology) constitutes a network of policy-makers, researchers and media funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. It is coordinated by the Competence Centre Technology-Diversity-Equal Chances (Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit e.V.). The core objective of the pact is to support the access of women to and their advancement in the professional areas of mathematics, informatics, natural sciences and technology.

In the framework of the initiative "Frauen an die Spitze" ("Women to the top"), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research has funded research and implementation projects that shed light on gender equality-related challenges in research. Topics of research projects that have received funding include: organisational structures and cultures in academia and in the private sector; work-life balance in academia and in the private sector; and gender dimensions of medical science. The initiative has been in place from 2007 until 2015.

Key actors

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF) has launched programmes and initiatives that have been of key importance with regard to efforts towards gender equality in research, notably the Federal Programme for Women Professors and the programme “Frauen an die Spitze”.

The Joint Science Conference (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz, GWK) brings together all ministers and senators responsible for science, research and finance at federal and Länder level. This body decides on all questions related to research policy strategies and research funding that affect both governmental levels, and works towards coordinated approaches.

The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (Kultusministerkonferenz) aims at ensuring coordination and cooperation between the Länder on issues related to research (and others) that are within the competences of the Länder.

The German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG), the largest research funding organisation in Europe, has had a significant impact on gender equality-related efforts made in higher education and research institutions, in particular by means of its Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality.

The Council of Science and Humanities (“Wissenschaftsrat”) advises the federal government and the Länder governments on the development of the higher education and research system and of higher education and research institutions.

Policy-makers and researchers can draw on expertise and services provided by competence centres specialised on gender equality (measures) in higher education and research, namely the Center of Excellence Women and Science (CEWS) and the Competence Center Technology-Diversity-Equal Chances (Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit e.V.).

INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY RESEARCH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS

A rather large number of initiatives promoting gender equality in research organisations has been developed and implemented in Germany. This is likely to be linked to the large number of gender equality plans, resulting from the legal obligation and the incentives provided by the policy and stimulatory initiatives.

The Toolbox for the Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality of the German Research Foundation (DFG) provides a selection of gender equality measures implemented in German higher education and research institutions. A small selection of tools/instruments, approaches and initiatives is provided below, covering the six dimensions or topics of practices defined by the German Research Foundation:

- 1 | Staff / early career researchers: [Munich Dual Career Office](#) (MDCO), Technische Universität München (TUM)
- 2 | Work-life balance: [Research and Family Consultation](#), Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg
- 3 | Research / academic culture: [Gender in Medicine Working Group](#), RWTH Aachen
- 4 | Organisational development: [Guidelines for appointment processes that are fair to all genders](#), Ruhr-Universität Bochum
- 5 | Gender in research and academia: [Visiting Professorship in Gender and Diversity](#), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover
- 6 | Quality assurance: [Gender and Diversity in Teaching Programme and Gender Competence Certificate for Teaching Staff](#), Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

While all public higher education institutions and non-university public research institutions are by law obliged to issue a gender equality plan, not all seem to have a one in place. To date, no study has been conducted to comprehensively assess the compliance with this legal obligation in research organisations across Germany. There is no legal obligation to make gender equality plans publicly available. The required characteristics of the gender equality plans in higher education institutions differ across the German Länder. Some laws require gender equality plans at central and decentral (faculty, etc.) level, while others only refer to one (central) plan per institution. The format and contents of these gender equality plans are not prescribed by law and differ significantly between the institutions. For example, gender equality plans may or may not contain: an analysis of gender relations at the institution; a specific objective of the plan and/or individual measures; a budget assigned to each measure; target groups of measures; the timeframe for the implementation of each measure; and/or agents responsible for the implementation. In many higher education institutions, the design of the gender equality plan responds to requirements of the Research Oriented Standards on Gender Equality issued by the German Research Foundation or of the Federal Programme for Women Professors.

Eleven German research organisations took or are taking part of consortia of EU-funded structural change projects, namely Fraunhofer (STAGES and WHIST), University of Wuppertal (GENDERTIME), Aachen University (FESTA), University of Vechta (EGERA), the Leibniz Institute of Polymer Research Dresden (GENISLAB), the Leibniz Institute for Solid State and Materials Research (DIVERSITY), Georg-August-University of Göttingen (DIVERSITY), the Karlsruher Institute for Technology (DIVERSITY), and the Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron DESY (GENERA). GESIS, the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, was the evaluator of INTEGER. Two German universities have set up gender equality plans within the framework of such EU-funded projects, i.e. in the GENDERTIME project at the University of Wuppertal and in the project EGERA ('Effective Gender Equality in Research and the Academia') at the University of Vechta (both 2014-2018).

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

GenderNet, Freie Universität Berlin

GenderNet Freie Universität Berlin is a network structure aimed to facilitate and boost communication and cooperation between actors in the areas of gender research and gender equality practice at different levels. This innovative, flexible structure brings together researchers, gender equality officers, management and administration officials, and members of committees and other relevant bodies. The purpose is that these actors jointly address current challenges and to drive forward excellent gender research, inclusive gender equality practice, international dialogue and transnational cooperation.

The work within GenderNet Freie Universität Berlin is coordinated by a steering team (“Leitungsteam”) consisting of key actors in university management, gender equality work and gender research of the university. Five project teams have been set up to each address one of the following current challenges through joint efforts: gender in research; internationalisation; gender in MINT subjects (mathematics, information sciences, natural sciences, and technology); diversity; and the institutional strategy.

Gender & Diversity Controlling, Goethe University Frankfurt

The approach to Gender & Diversity Controlling that has been implemented at Goethe University Frankfurt since 2010 features a standardised procedure steered at central level that grants the rather autonomous, diverse faculties (“Fachbereiche”) freedom to design tailor-made initiatives. Its introduction traces back to the university’s gender action plan (“Frauenförderplan 2009-2013”).

The Gender & Diversity Controlling coordinator is in charge of steering the controlling procedures and of managing the compilation of gender and diversity statistics within the university.

Every two years, the faculties are obliged to report on the status quo related to gender (in)equalities and on their Gender & Diversity Action Plan (GEDAP). The process is steered by the Gender & Diversity Controlling coordinator who provides the faculties with data, tools and advice. Based on their own assessment and on the advice received from the coordinator, the faculties set up the action plan for the next two years. The Gender & Diversity Controlling coordinator and, subsequently, the University Senate’s commission on gender equality and diversity assess the new action plan. The faculties are then supposed to adjust the plan based on this feedback.

By now, Gender & Diversity Controlling has become well-established and widely accepted across the university. Notably, the scope and quality of the Gender & Diversity Action Plans at faculty level have been enhanced since Gender & Diversity Controlling was first set up.

