

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Germany

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH

Legal framework

In addition to general legal provisions on gender equality at federal and state level, there are specific legal provisions on gender equality in public research.

§ 3 of the 2007 Framework Act for Higher Education (*Hochschulrahmengesetz*, HRG) obliges universities to promote gender equality and strive to eliminate existing inequalities. Compliance with this provision is a criterion for granting public funding to universities (HRG, § 5). HRG § 6 mandates evaluation of universities' compliance with their gender equality-related obligations at regular intervals. HRG, § 37 (2) also states that universities must strive towards an "appropriate" representation of women and men in university bodies.

The primary authority for higher education rests with the federal states. Although regulation of gender equality varies, recent years have seen a trend towards strengthening the legal framework for equality in universities. All higher education acts at State level include provisions on Equal Opportunities Commissioners or women's representatives, whose duties, rights, election/selection procedure, term in office and infrastructure differ by State. Some broader concrete measures can also be highlighted:

- Cascade model: university management works to ensure that the proportion of women when filling academic qualification positions and professorships is at least the same as at the next-lowest qualification level . This model has been adopted by several States, with North Rhine-Westphalia making it mandatory;
- Gender equality plans: universities create and adopt framework plans that work towards the implementation of equal opportunities for women and men in all status and employment groups, and reduce structural disadvantages;
- Gender-sensitive job advertisements: some States, such as Baden- Wuerttemberg and Bremen, oblige universities to advertise jobs so as to appeal to women and men, regardless

of origin, religion or sexual orientation.

The Federal Equality Law (*Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz*) provides a set of rules on Equal Opportunities Commissioners in federal agencies that applies to non-university public research institutions^[1] (§ 19-36). § 11 of the Law obliges non-university public research institutions to issue a gender equality plan.

Policy framework

In a so-called Implementation Agreement, within the framework of the Joint Science Conference (*Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz, GWK*) the federal and State governments have legally committed to supporting gender equality in their jointly funded research institutions and initiatives (*Ausführungsvereinbarung zum GWK-Abkommen über die Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern bei der gemeinsamen Forschungsförderung, AV-Glei, § 1*). The Agreement also commits them to working towards the elimination of gender-based discrimination. It contains specific provisions on recruitment procedures, career promotion and Gender Equality Officers. It stipulates that in cases where candidates are equally qualified, the candidate of the underrepresented sex will be preferred in recruitment and promotion procedures (with some exceptions) (AV-Glei, Anlage, § 4).

The Pact for Research and Innovation (PFI)^[2] is a research-funding initiative of the German federal and State governments. It is designed to give publicly funded non-university research institutions security through continuous budget increases. The PFI also establishes targets to advance gender equality in these institutions. In PFI 2011-2015, the institutions committed to following the cascade model, significantly increasing numbers of women researchers (especially in leadership positions), and considering the use of further incentives and sanctions. In May 2019, PFI 2021-2030 was agreed. The science organisations report on the achievement of the agreed research policy goals in regular monitoring reports published by the Joint Science Conference.

One of the most prominent government initiatives to promote gender equality in higher education and research is the Federal Programme for Women Professors (*Professorinnenprogramm*)^[3]. Established in 2007, it is a joint programme of the federal government and the States' governments. A twofold approach encourages the design and implementation of comprehensive gender equality strategies at German higher education institutes (HEIs) and increases the number and share of women professors. Within the framework of this programme, HEIs submit gender equality concepts (strategies with specific measures) for consideration. 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

The Federal Equality Foundation (*Bundesstiftung Gleichstellung*) is the latest development in nationwide stimuli for gender equality. Agreed in May 2021, it will be supported and monitored by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. The purpose of the Foundation is to advance and accelerate equality of women and men. It aims to strengthen practical gender equality work by advising public administration, civil society, research and businesses on the development of solutions and their implementation. The Foundation will also act as a networking platform for these different actors, facilitating the transfer of knowledge.

In 2008, the General Assembly of the German Research Foundation (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, DFG^[4]) established “Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality”, consisting 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”. Higher education and research institutions have set up gender equality concepts to comply with these standards. A core element of the personal standards is the cascade model, for example. The Foundation regularly updates and reports on implementation.

The TOTAL E-QUALITY Award^[5] is a well-established certificate, managed by TOTAL E-QUALITY Deutschland e.V. and based on a self-assessment instrument. Applicants from HEIs are asked to highlight gender equality initiatives in various areas of action (e.g. recruitment, career development, work-life balance, organisational development) and to provide sex-disaggregated data. Another widespread certificate is the family-friendly university audit (*familiengerechte hochschule*)^[6]. The audit was initiated by the German Hertie Foundation and is implemented by its subsidiary, *berufundfamilie GmbH*. Together with an auditor, participating universities determine their status and define a strategy to strengthen family-friendly work and study conditions.

The National Pact for Women in mathematics, informatics, natural sciences and technology (MINT) Careers is a network of policymakers, researchers and media. It is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and coordinated by the Competence Centre Technology-Diversity-Equal Opportunities (*Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit* e.V.^[7]). The Pact seeks to support women’s access and advancement in MINT professions.

The *Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit* e.V. organises a popular annual initiative – “Girls’ Day”. Since 2001, companies, businesses and universities throughout Germany have opened their doors to schoolgirls from 5th grade upwards on Girls’ Day. During their visits, girls learn about apprenticeship opportunities and university studies in IT, trades, natural sciences and technology. They also meet women role models in leadership positions in business and politics. Girls’ Day is designed to attract girls to fields in which women are underrepresented.

The Contact Point Women into EU Research (FiF^[8]) is part of the German network of National Contact Points (NCPs) and is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. It advises researchers in/from Germany on matters relating to gender and equal opportunities in the EU research framework programme, Horizon Europe. It offers seminars, workshops and lectures on EU research funding, initial information on funding opportunities and application procedures, and information on working as an expert for the EU.

There are various charters and self-commitment initiatives. One example is the Charter Family in the University, where universities commit themselves to implementing measures that make their working environment more family-friendly.

There are numerous stimulatory initiatives at State level, with over 35 listed in the Gesis Database^[9]. Examples include:

- Scientifica in Baden-Wuerttemberg: Scientifica is an information portal featuring ways to improve career opportunities for women in the sciences, especially science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM);
- Berlin Equal Opportunity Programme: the programme supports young women researchers with different goals, including early successor appointments, qualification and professionalisation of women researchers and artists for a professorship, stabilisation of women's research careers in the post-doctoral phase, anchoring gender aspects in research and teaching, and qualification of women in the natural and technical sciences;
- Dialogue Initiative Gender Equitable University Culture in Lower Saxony: Since 2014, the initiative has facilitated intensive cooperation in gender equality policy between universities and the Ministry of Science and Culture of Lower Saxony. It aims to break down structural and habitual barriers to women and men's balanced participation and involvement in teaching, research and management.

Key actors

Almost all key players involved in Germany's gender equality policy system in academia and research regularly develop position and strategy papers and statements on gender equality.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research has launched programmes and initiatives that spurred 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*^[10]) brings together all ministers and senators responsible for science, research and finance at federal and State level. This body decides on all questions related to research policy strategies and funding that affect both levels of government, and works towards coordinated approaches. The GWK publishes annual monitoring reports for the PFI, including recent changes in gender equality measures in research institutions.

The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the States (*Kultusministerkonferenz*^[11]) aims to ensure coordination and cooperation between the States on issues related to research (and others) that fall within their competence.

The Federal Conference of Women's and Gender Equality Representatives at Universities (*bukof*^[12]) is a non-profit association that unites all professionals responsible for shaping the structure and culture of universities in Germany in a gender-equal way. In a 2019 statement, bukof called on all universities to jointly defend gender equality and gender policy achievements and goals, and to oppose anti-feminist positions.

The DFG^[13] is the largest research funding organisation in Europe. It has had a significant impact on gender equality-related efforts in higher education and research institutions, particularly through its Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality. It also developed a freely accessible online toolbox that provides an overview of possible gender equality measures in research and teaching.

The German Rectors' Conference (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz, HRK*^[14]) is an association of State and State-recognised universities and represents their interest in politics and society. In its recent position paper of 2019, the HRK recommends various measures to increase the proportion of women in leadership positions in research.

The Council of Science and Humanities (*Wissenschaftsrat*^[15]) advises the federal and State governments on the development of the higher education and research system and higher education and research institutions.

Policymakers and researchers can draw on expertise and services provided by competence centres specialising in gender equality (measures) in higher education and research. These include the Centre of Excellence Women and Science (CEWS) and the Competence Centre Technology-Diversity-Equal Opportunities (*Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit e.V.*).

INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY RESEARCH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS

Germany has seen a large number of initiatives promoting gender equality in research organisations. This is likely linked to the numbers of gender equality plans (GEPs) resulting from legal obligations, as well as incentives provided by policy and stimulatory initiatives.

The Toolbox for the DFG's Research-Oriented Standards provides a selection of gender equality measures implemented in German higher education and research institutions. Some of these are outlined below, covering the six dimensions or topics of practices defined by the DFG:

- 1 | Staff/early career researchers: plan m Mentoring for women scientists and engineers, Bremen University;
- 2 | Work-life balance: studying with a child^[16], Osnabrück University;
- 3 | Research/academic culture: Clara von Simson Award, Berlin University of Technology;
- 4 | Organisational development: Women scientists to the top (*Wissenschaftlerinnen an die Spitze*), Berlin University of Technology;
- 5 | Gender in research and academia: Interdisciplinary Symposium for Women Engineers and Scientists (ISINA), Chemnitz University of Technology;
- 6 | Quality assurance: Gender Equality and Diversity Action Plans (GEDAPS), Goethe University Frankfurt am Main.

All public HEIs and non-university public research institutions are legally obliged to issue a GEP. The 2021 "She Figures" report by the European Commission [Directorate-General for Research and Innovation](#) showed that 89 % of German higher education institutions and 62 % of public research organisations have taken actions or measures towards gender equality. While this study might not be representative of research overall, it nevertheless shows a strong tendency towards the diffusion of measures promoting gender equality in R&I (including GEPs) in Germany.

There is no legal obligation to make GEPs publicly available and the required characteristics for HEIs differ between German States. Some laws require GEPs at central and decentralised (faculty, etc.) level, while others only refer to a central plan. GEPs 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 implementation. In many HEIs, the GEP responds to the requirements of the DFG Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality or those of the Federal Programme for Women Professors.

Several German research organisations are involved in EU-funded structural change projects. The most recent projects are:

- ...
- GENERA - DESY;
- Baltic Gender - Kiel University, Kiel University of Applied Sciences, GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel and Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research, Warnemünde;
- Equal4Europe - ESMT Berlin;
- EFFORTI - Fraunhofer Society;
- GenderAction - DLR Project Management Agency (Contact Point Women into EU Research);
- Change! - RWTH Aachen und Fraunhofer Society;
- LeTSGEPs - RWTH Aachen and Max Planck Society;
- GEECCO – GESIS;
- SPEAR - RWTH Aachen;
- TINNGO - TU Ilmenau.

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

Spokesperson budget, DFG

In order to promote the visibility of women in decision-making positions, the Joint Committee of the DFG decided to introduce a special budget for DFG-funded research networks. Since the beginning of 2021, networks whose spokesperson/coordinator belongs to an underrepresented gender at leadership level can apply for additional, uncommitted funding of EUR 80,000 per funding year. The DFG regularly publishes information on underrepresented genders at project management level.

Gender inclusion funding should be used for individual and subject/project-related activities that serve to facilitate the spokesperson's role. This applies to coordinators in priority programmes. Funding can be used for research or administrative support staff, to fund a sabbatical for the spokesperson, or for a partial temporary substitute clinician position.

Strategy for Equal Opportunities, University of Cologne

The University of Cologne's Strategy for Equal Opportunities was co-created as part of a two-year dialogue with student and employee representatives. It includes specific action plans against all grounds of discrimination, which are currently being implemented. The thematically varied strategy follows different principles: (1) empowerment: participatory development of the strategy; (2) evidence-based: current research is taken into account when developing measures; (3) intersectionality; and (4) sustainability (continuous monitoring). The Strategy has been in place since 2018 and is unusual because of its participatory and reflective approach that views equal opportunity as a responsibility of all employees and students.

BestChance, Fraunhofer Society

In 2019, the Fraunhofer Society created the stimulus "BestChance" to raise awareness of gender equality measures that can be implemented in research organisations. Employees of the different institutes of the Fraunhofer Society can nominate and propose measures, teams, or a specific project or person in their institutes, and the winners receive EUR 3,000 prize money. BestChance increases the visibility of effective measures, rewards outstanding commitment to gender equality, and encourages imitation.

Footnotes

[1] Including the largest German research organisations, such as the Helmholtz Association, the Fraunhofer Society, the Max Planck Society and the Leibniz Association.

[2] <https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/forschung/das-wissenschaftssystem/pakt-fuer-...>

[3] <https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/forschung/chancengerechtigkeit-und-vielfalt-...>

[4] <https://www.dfg.de/>

[5] <https://www.total-e-quality.de/>

[6] <https://www.berufundfamilie.de/auditierung-unternehmen-institutionen-hoc-...>

[7] <https://www.kompetenzz.de/>

[8] <https://www.horizont2020.de/beratung-fif.htm>

[9] <https://www.gesis.org/starq/infoangebote/bund-und-laendermassnahmen>

[10] <https://www.gwk-bonn.de/en/>

[11] <https://www.kmk.org/kmk/information-in-english.html>

[12] <https://bukof.de/>

[13] <https://www.dfg.de/>

[14] <https://www.hrk.de/hrk-at-a-glance/>

[15] https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/DE/Home/home_node.html

