

FVB DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

- adopted by the FVB Executive Board on February 17, 2022 -

Preamble

This Diversity and Inclusion Strategy aims to generate a welcoming, diverse and inclusive working environment that allows scientists and support staff to harmoniously collaborate regardless of their backgrounds and identities and to maximise their individual and joint success in implementing the missions of the FVB Institutes. We strive to develop an organisational culture that is characterised by mutual respect and support for all. Such a culture will foster our overarching aim of scientific excellence, as research communities comprising people of diverse backgrounds stimulate innovation and productivity [1]. This shall be attained by identifying inequalities, removing obstacles and conducting mitigation measures to support underrepresented groups.

1 Aims of the FVB Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

This strategy defines the general mind-set and principles towards staff¹ diversity and inclusion and the corresponding strategic aims for all Research Institutes and the Joint Administration of the FVB².

The aims of the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy are to

- increase staff diversity and inclusion at FVB;
- formulate the principles the FVB stands for with respect to diversity and inclusion;
- increase the awareness of all staff members about differences in privileges and reduce prejudice, unconscious biases and discrimination;
- acknowledge privileges, and use them to foster and support colleagues with fewer privileges;
- establish *diversity and inclusion* as a guiding principle in science management, strategic development and procedures;
- encourage all Institutes and the Joint Administration to implement measures to provide all staff members at FVB with equitable access to opportunities and that access to resources is not limited based on a person's background or identity; define mandatory and optional actions to enhance diversity and inclusion;
- provide guidance to all Institutes and the Joint Administration on how to create an inclusive environment where people with different backgrounds and identities feel welcome, safe, respected and supported, and can thus thrive;

¹ The terms *staff* and *staff members* refer to everyone temporarily and permanently active under the umbrella of the FVB, regardless of the nature of their contract, including but not restricted to scientists, science support and administrative staff on fixed-term or permanently employment contracts, doctoral researchers employed through universities, scholarship holders, professors jointly appointed with universities, trainees, participants in the federal volunteer service, guests, interns, or students on unpaid contracts working on their theses.

² Concrete actions appropriate to achieve these strategic aims must be defined within each Institute and within the Joint Administration individually, since conditions and cultures differ among them.

- commit all Institutes and the Joint Administration to establish transparent processes and responsibilities for complaints about discrimination, which complement this strategy and ensure compliance with the principles.

2 Definitions

Staff diversity. This refers to a working environment composed of people with varying characteristics comprising numerous dimensions of diversity (see 3 Dimensions of Diversity and [Supplement 2](#)). Fostering diversity in the work context involves, but is not limited to, balanced recruitment, equitable access to education and training, equal working conditions and remuneration and equal opportunities for participation in decision making and promotion.

Treatment. We distinguish between equal and equitable treatment. **Equal treatment** means that every person is treated in the same way and thus not discriminated against (for a definition of discrimination see [Supplement 3](#)). **Equitable treatment** acknowledges the fact that people have different requirements in order to get equal opportunities, and takes action to remedy this fact (see [Supplement 1.1](#)). We use the term “**underprivileged**” in this document to refer to all historically, persistently, or structurally disadvantaged, marginalised or historically excluded groups that are consequently often still underrepresented in academia, especially in senior positions (see [Supplement 1.2](#)).

Inclusion. This is an active, intentional, and continuous process to address inequities in power and privilege, and build a respectful and diverse community that ensures welcoming spaces and opportunities to flourish for all [2]. True inclusivity requires structural changes that create spaces where all voices are given a platform to exert influence (for concrete steps see [Supplement 1.3](#)).

3 Dimensions of Diversity

The properties in which people differ from each other are called dimensions of diversity. There are many such dimensions and the societal perception and relevance differs and changes over time. We welcome diversity in all dimensions. The below-mentioned dimensions are those currently known to lead to structural discrimination and are meaningful in our work context.

Structural discrimination is the discrimination of certain groups by the rules and norms that society follows, regardless of any individual behaviour or achievement. We thus address these dimensions explicitly; they correspond to those that discrimination against is forbidden by German law in the General Equal Treatment Act § 1 ([Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz](#), AGG) or that are additionally highlighted in the [Charta der Vielfalt](#)³. The order of these dimensions is alphabetical and therefore does not reflect importance. A detailed explanation of each of these dimensions of diversity along with suggestions for sensitive language use and potential support actions is given in [Supplement 2](#).

- Age
- Ethnic background and nationality
- Physical or mental disabilities
- Religion, worldview and belief
- Sex and gender

³ *Charta der Vielfalt* (German Diversity Charter): This Charter provides guidelines to thousands of German employers who signed the declaration and thereby committed themselves to a number of principles linked to diversity, assists them in implementing their diversity management and facilitates mutual learning.

- Sexual orientation
- Social background

A person can belong to several underprivileged groups in different dimensions of diversity. The effects can then add up.

Intersectionality describes the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism or sexism) combine and overlap (intersect) in underprivileged individuals or groups. Measures taken at the workplace to prevent institutional or compensate structural direct or indirect discrimination (for explanation see [Supplement 3](#)) involving the above mentioned and other dimensions of diversity should also account for intersectionality and heterogeneity within groups [3].

4 Fostering diversity and inclusion

As data on some dimensions of diversity must not be recorded and certain aspects of diversity are invisible, structural discrimination cannot be detected numerically and no quotas can be set (for details and examples see [Supplement 4](#)). By actively inviting discriminated groups to share their insights and experiences in a protected space, using research results and exchanging findings with other institutes, e.g. within FVB and the Leibniz Association, we can detect obstacles and remove or at least mitigate them. Such measures should be publicly communicated to enhance the attraction of underprivileged groups.

4.1 Principles of FVB to enhance diversity and inclusion

The FVB stands for the following principles:

- All members of FVB respect and support diversity in all its dimensions in their workplace.
- All members must not discriminate any person on purpose based on any dimension of diversity. If anyone inadvertently discriminates a person or group this should be addressed and more inclusive wordings or behaviours should be developed jointly. After this, repeated offensive behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Clear complaint structures and procedures support the establishment of a culture of fostering diversity and inclusion.

These principles are implemented through a set of actions to which all Institutes and the Joint Administration of the FVB are committed.

4.2 Development of a diversity-friendly culture

A diversity-friendly and inclusive working environment is created through the behaviour of many staff members. The management takes suitable actions to promote the following:

- All staff members are encouraged to contribute to a more inclusive workplace culture by
 - intervening in any discriminatory behaviour they encounter by confronting the discriminating person and/or offering support to the discriminated person and/or reporting the incident to someone who will take concrete action;
 - getting to know persons from underrepresented groups and actively including them in work-related activities;

- helping to identify structural barriers and developing solutions;
- drawing attention to lacking diversity in multi-person panels or expert groups;
- using a non-offending, inclusive language.
- Staff members with leading roles and supervisory functions have special responsibility to prevent discrimination and foster diversity and inclusion. They are expected to
 - participate in trainings that address avoiding bias and discrimination;
 - actively avoid bias in recruitment and promotion decisions;
 - actively raise awareness on diversity and inclusion;
 - actively encourage reporting of discrimination and harassment, protect victims, informants and witnesses;
 - resolve problems proactively, transparently and fast;
 - involve experts (e.g. from the complaint office) if they are not able to resolve problems;
 - ensure diversity when organising or contributing to multi-person panels, public or educational events;
 - inform the staff members they are responsible for about the diversity and inclusion principles that the Institute and the FVB adhere to and about the complaint system.
- Staff members with leading roles and supervisory functions can further foster diversity and inclusion by
 - actively engaging in open and respectful discussions about the structures that perpetuate inequality with persons of underprivileged groups;
 - proactively addressing the issue of inequality, creating spaces where all voices can be heard and being open to suggestions by all;
 - striving to remove barriers and create equal opportunities;
 - conducting active bystander intervention in case they perceive discrimination – thus also acting as a role model;
 - using their privileged position to provide special support to members of underprivileged groups enhancing their chances to reach an equal position in their career.

4.3 Diversity officer and complaint office

- Each Institute and the Joint Administration appoint a dedicated diversity officer; this could also be the spokesperson of a diversity group.
- With the help of the diversity officer, each Institute and the Joint Administration establish a complaint office and transparent procedures that protect victims and persons reporting discriminations and fulfil the provisions of the AGG [6]. These must be known and easily assessable to all staff.
- Complaint office members including the diversity officer are given the chance to participate in trainings to ensure the correct performance of their task. They further get the opportunity to exchange experiences within the FVB at least annually.

- The diversity officer and complaint office serve as mediators in cases of reported discrimination and determine if the complaint is substantiated. They attempt to resolve the conflict by mutual learning.
- The diversity officer advises the management on all aspects of diversity and inclusion, supports them in designing concrete actions and is consulted in diversity-related strategic developments. This should be harmonized with other representatives such as equal opportunities or disability representatives.
- There is at least one annual meeting of all diversity officers of FVB to exchange information and best practice examples. This group will develop their operation mode, procedures and focus activities.

4.4 Awareness rising and training

- The institute management and a dedicated diversity officer actively promote an inclusive and tolerant working atmosphere through suitable actions.
- Each FVB Institute and the Joint Administration develop mechanisms to ensure that all staff members are aware of and acknowledge the general strategy regarding diversity and inclusion and the respective expected conduct of all staff members.
- The Diversity and Inclusion Strategy of FVB or a respective institutional strategy is publicly visible and linked in all job announcements.
- All staff members are offered dedicated training to raise awareness on and minimise inequalities (unconscious bias, methods to prevent biased decisions and support, use of inclusive language).
- The topic of diversity and inclusion is addressed in the annual staff interviews. Supervisors are guided accordingly.

4.5 Strategic development

- Each Institute and the Joint Administration sign the [Charta der Vielfalt](#) and fulfil the respective obligations.
- All Institutes gather data on the number and type of complaints and use these as a basis for planning actions.
- There is an annual reporting in the FVB Executive Board on activities to enhance diversity by each Institute and the Joint Administration to enable mutual learning and best practice exchange, as a learning process for all.
- Each Institute and the Joint Administration are encouraged to conduct a participatory process to develop an action plan to improve diversity and inclusion.
- A Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan is developed specifically for each FVB Institute and the Joint Administration. It defines clear responsibilities, if possible target indicators and timelines and is evaluated and updated at least every 4 years. It should operationalize the principles of diversity and the actions above and should contain additional institute-specific actions based on identified obstacles and practices to
 - raise awareness, reduce prejudice and prevent discrimination;

- reduce structural and institutional exclusions or discriminations by identifying obstacles and planning countermeasures;
- develop recruitment and promotion processes that prevent discrimination;
- create services for different needs: define responsibilities, train people;
- include underprivileged persons in decision-making processes;
- foster acceptance of different identities and ways of life: provide opportunities to interact and exchange;
- actively promote diversity and inclusion by attracting and retaining members of underprivileged groups;
- ensure that public and educational events show diverse experts to change the public stereotypic view on scientists and to encourage diverse pupils and students to careers in research.



Supplement 1: Basic principles

1.1 Equitable treatment

The fact that people have unequal opportunities may stem from past or present societal or institutional differences. Equity implies that an individual may need to experience or receive something different (not equal) in order to maintain equal opportunities and access [7]. For example, a person with a wheelchair may need differential access to upper building levels relative to someone else. Different groups require different kinds of support and protected spaces. As barriers exist and thus opportunities differ, remedial actions are recommended. The ultimate aim is to create conditions that are barrier free for all, so that only factors intrinsic to the staff member remain decisive in career opportunities, such as motivation, creativity, willingness to learn and develop, and the required skillset for the intended tasks.

1.2 Privilege

Societal norms still privilege some groups and disadvantage and exclude others. This history entrains a legacy of day-to-day barriers that contributed to past, and perpetuate current, inequities which compound over time. Our systems, in the form of policies, practices, culture, behaviours, and beliefs continue to maintain these barriers in an often unconscious, unrecognized practice of doing things as they have always been done and thus maintain the historical exclusions (adapted from [2]).

1.3 Inclusion

In order to create an inclusive workspace, opportunities and time need to be deliberately provided for communication and interaction to foster mutual understanding and appreciation. Not the persons from the underprivileged groups, but the working atmosphere and collegial behaviour have to change. The less represented groups are, the more we need to ensure to get to know their views and needs, to actively include and support those present at FVB and to use their expertise to improve the attractiveness of FVB as an employer to future employees from these groups. Importantly, this attitude of inclusiveness holds for all, also from one underprivileged group to another. Equally important, the fundamentals of accurate, reproducible and reliable scientific research and academic freedom must be respected at all times, and sharing and publication of results must not be limited or biased due to the personal opinion, belief or worldview of research or support staff. A diverse and inclusive working environment is important to foster the central aim of scientific excellence shared by all Institutes within the FVB.

Supplement 2: Dimensions of diversity

FVB has taken great care to use inclusive language and descriptions. Language changes constantly and the societal discussion of diversity and the self-description of groups in different dimensions of diversity also evolves. The effort to increase inclusivity but also individuality leads to frequent changes in currently accepted terminology. Thus, this section requires updates; recommendations for alterations to ensure inclusive and discrimination-poor wording are welcome.

2.1 Age

Age diversity is the representation of people of different ages in the workplace. This is an interesting diversity dimension because it changes for every individual over time. The age of each staff member is known to the employer as the date of birth is recorded for each contract. According to the German Labour Market statistics (Statistisches Bundesamt), people aged between 15 and retirement age are employable; this range covers 3 generations.

A workplace with employees with a diverse age structure is potentially more successful and productive than one with homogeneous ages if the tasks are innovative and creative [8], since each age group has unique strengths. For example, younger employees bring skills related to the latest technology and innovations, while older employees have a broad range of experiences on past and present successes and failures and on problem solving. Being a part of a mixed-aged workplace group practicing knowledge transfer and mentoring increases motivation for both older and younger colleagues and increases their intent to stay with the organisation [9].

Possible actions: Age diversity necessitates equitable treatment of employees of any age, which should be addressed in an age and life-stage tailored personnel development. A culture of mutual support and appreciation of strengths rather than focussing on shortcomings is the most productive. In recruitment of researchers, the procedures need to make sure that academic achievements are related not to the actual age of the applicant but to the **academic age**, i.e. the years a person has been active in academic research adjusted for part time employment. This helps to avoid discrimination of persons with care obligations, long term sick leave and non-linear career paths. There are structural restrictions in the German academic system on academic age, e.g. in The German Act on Fixed-Term Scientific Contracts § 2 ([Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz](#)), or even age limits in scholarships and stipends. Transparent career guidelines for postdocs contribute to transparency on career development within the respective institute, especially for international researchers who may be unaware of legal constraints.

2.2 Ethnic origin

Ethnicity and ethnic origin (ancestry) are related but different concepts [10].

Ethnicity (ethnic group) refers to people who identify with each other on the basis of shared attributes like common heritage, culture, ancestry, language, dialect, history, identity and geographic origin. It is a social construct, as membership is self-defined and mainly meaningful to the person concerned. Ethnicity tends to be influenced in many cases by [nationality and language](#), two dimensions of diversity that are easier to measure and may for some purposes serve as proxies.

Ethnic origin or ancestry usually refers to geographic origin or to heritage and descend from a certain group and is thus the most scientific term. Since ancestry is usually mixed, the borders that we use to categorise are somewhat arbitrary.

In former times, racial categories were developed as a taxonomic grouping of humans, formed during European colonialism. They are associated with physical characteristics (e.g. skin colour or hair texture), but are unscientific and biased indicators for underlying biological differences or place of origin. Racial categories are abused to justify racist discriminations.

Since ethnic origin is highly sensitive personal information defined as a special category of personal data by the [General Data Protection Regulation](#) Art. 9, these can only be collected with the explicit consent of the person and a clearly specified purpose. Thus, none of these data are collected by employers in Germany.

Some shyness to address barriers for groups of underprivileged ethnic origin is the uncertainty of how to refer to these groups in a non-offensive way. In general, it is best to ask members of these groups how they self-identify and how they would like to be addressed. The frequently used acronym BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) is the self-designated umbrella term naming major groups of underprivileged ethnic origins and acknowledging that these groups face different levels of racism. The capital letters reflect that these are constructed patterns of attribution and not real “characteristics” attributable to the colour of the skin. Thus, in this context, being Black does not only mean being assigned to an assumed “ethnic group”, but is also linked to the experience of being perceived and discriminated in a certain way [11]. BIPOC is sometimes extended to BIPOCA (where A either refers to Asian or to *and Allies*) or switched to IBPOC to stress the “first people first” notion.

Possible actions: To harness these diverse attributes, it is important to recruit, retain, and advance the career of employees regardless of their ethnic origins and to help all thrive in the workplace. An ethnically diverse workplace reduces prejudice and stereotypes towards certain ethnic groups and provides an environment where every staff member is respected and treated equally. Behaviour of all staff members at work should not only be non-discriminatory but actively anti-racist. This can be promoted through bystander intervention trainings. By creating opportunities for members of disadvantaged ethnical origins to report on their difficulties and obstacles can help to jointly develop support actions.

2.3 Nationality and language

Nationality is a legal status of a person holding citizenship of one or more nations. The nationality of each staff member is part of the data recorded by the employer and thus available for analyses. In current reports this dimension is summarised into “German/Non-German” and sometimes the number of different nationalities is used in reports as a measure of internationalisation. Including all non-German employees in one category might mask the underrepresentation of some regions. Since most people hold the nationality of the country they grew up in, nationality is also often related to the cultural background and thus related to the languages spoken.

Possible actions: Data analyses on nationality should be improved by differentiating international staff members by continent, EU membership or country, depending on the context. The diversity in nationalities might be reported internally as well as publicly, e.g. in the annual research report or on the webpage.

The working environment needs to ensure that persons are not excluded from participation or information due to language barriers. Language requirements should be clearly defined in job announcements. Providing all information in English, the currently universal language of science, as well as in German is strongly recommended. Identifying persons who can help mediating language barriers and defining measures to remove these barriers is an important support of international staff members.

Offering language training in English and German is also a recommended practice to improve communication and staff cohesion. German courses are an effective measure to ensure the well-being and integration of international employees, not only in the work place but also in society. And this will benefit the mental health of the employee and thus, their performance at work. English courses for staff members are also useful as they provide them with the opportunity to improve communication and avoid misunderstandings within a highly internationalized context.

In recruitment processes and professional discussions, a person's lack of eloquence in the language used is often perceived as a lack of in depth thinking. This perception might also reduce the willingness of some participants to speak up. It is important to ensure to develop a culture that gives every person sufficient opportunity to express themselves adequately.

2.4 Persons with physical or mental disabilities

Every person has different mental and physical abilities. If one or more of these are significantly impaired in comparison to the average of the population, this is considered a disability. Categories of disability types include various physical and mental impairments that can hamper or reduce a person's ability to carry out their day-to-day activities. Chronic diseases may have comparable effects. Employers register persons with an official severely disabled person's identity card who have willingly presented this.

A motion to the German Bundestag [12] cites an internal survey on persons with disabilities conducted by the Network of Representatives of Severely Disabled Persons in the Leibniz Association in October 2020. This revealed strong "reciprocal barriers" when hiring employees with disabilities. Applicants often conceal an invisible disability for fear of discrimination, stigmatisation or unequal treatment, while employers have fears of contact and uncertainties – often due to ignorance about the impairment as well as prejudices about the performance of people with disabilities. In most Leibniz Institutes registered persons with disabilities work in the administration. The proportion of researchers with disabilities is 1% or less. A paper of the Education and Science Union [13] identifies multiple major obstacles for persons with disabilities or chronic illnesses in obtaining a doctoral degree, many of which are also valid for later career stages. The high time pressure of academic projects and employments does not permit time for health care and regeneration, chronic pains and vision problems affect reading literature, materials and facilities are not barrier free, the demand for maximum mobility and flexibility in academic careers is hard to meet. Active recruitment of persons with disabilities or other measures to increase their proportion are rare.

All employers are obliged to annually report the proportion of persons with registered severe disabilities, which should be above 5%. The Leibniz Association voluntarily aims for 6% like federal public employers. Here only severely disabled persons holding a German severely disabled pass in an employment subject to social security contributions are counted. If quotas are not fulfilled the employer has to pay countervailing charges. Other information on disabilities is sensitive data that can only be recorded with the person's consent for clearly identified purposes. Qualified applicants with disabilities have to be invited to job interviews.

Possible actions: Application processes need to be fully accessible to persons with disabilities and encourage them to apply. Recruitment procedures need to ensure to objectively look at only the qualifications and abilities relevant to the respective job of all applicants without prejudice. There is a representative for persons with disabilities in each FVB Institute. This representative participates in recruitment processes involving applicants with severe disabilities and advises and supports staff

members with or at risk of disabilities upon request. Persons with disabilities should receive dedicated support tailored to their individual needs for full inclusion into their working environment.

Persons with disabilities are a very heterogeneous group. A willingness to deal with the different forms of limitations in a supportive way, independent of a legal claim, is an important step towards more diversity and inclusion. To enable a clear confidential communication and openness towards and from the side of persons with disabilities a common basis of trust and sensitive awareness and decent interaction must be created within the Institutes and the Joint Administration. This concerns the protected handling of confidential health data, the readiness to invest into workplace improvements as well as various offers of confidential counselling.

When referring to or addressing this group it is important to refer to the person first (persons with disabilities rather than disabled persons) and also to be more specific if possible (e.g. persons with visual impairments).

2.5 Religion, worldview and belief

The [German Constitution](#) § 4 stipulates that all citizens are free to practise their religion. In addition, the AGG protects people from discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in working lives.

Discrimination on the grounds of religion is also prohibited in everyday matters. Employers record membership to religious or ideological organisations only if they are recognised as a corporation under public law. At the moment these are only a few Christian or Jewish conventions. Thus, data on religion and worldview are incomplete and can only be used for the administration of taxes.

Possible actions: While religion and worldview are mostly a private matter, in the work context we can increase inclusiveness by accommodating for religious festivals and rest days when planning shifts and vacations, for prayer breaks and rooms and appropriate clothing for certain activities and for specific food storage and eating facilities if needed [14]. While no employer can foresee or accommodate all demands determined by religious beliefs or worldviews, it is important to create a culture of tolerance and an atmosphere in which persons can voice their specific demands safely. In cases where religious practices interfere with work duties, solutions should be discussed and agreed upon with the supervisor and, if necessary, involve the department head or other mediating persons. Religious beliefs or worldviews must not influence research conclusions, and for research support staff may not lead to the refusal of engaging in tasks for which they were hired and informed upon in advance. They also must not lead to discrimination of persons with different beliefs.

2.6 Sex and Gender

Sex refers to the biologically determined morphological and physiological characteristics of a person and is referred to as male, female or intersex. In contrast, **gender** is determined by each person's internal perception of themselves, which is influenced by biological but also social, cultural and political components that can change over time. A person may identify as a woman, a man, a combination of both male and female, neither male nor female (non-binary), different genders at different times (gender fluid) or as no specific gender at all. A person's gender identity may or may not be the same as their sex assigned at birth. The sex of each staff member is recorded by each employer categorised as female, male or diverse. Since the diverse category was only added in 2018 to the German legal system, laws and regulations on gender equality all pre-date this and thus only explicitly mention equal opportunities for women and men.

Obligatory actions: In Germany, equal opportunities for women and men in the work context and the measures leading to this are clearly defined by law ([Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz](#) BGleIG, [AVGlei](#) and its further specification for FVB). Equal opportunities officers at each Institute, the Joint Administration and a central one at FVB ensure the compliance with these laws. Specified gender equality plans define measures to support females when underrepresented.

At present, male researchers in academia and the private sector dominate in advanced career stages, especially in leadership positions. This is very pronounced in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines and is the result of conscious and unconscious bias and systemic inequalities favouring men. All Leibniz Institutes follow the “cascade model” that requires to systematically increase the proportion of female researchers at each career and payment level until 50% are reached. Staff members not receiving their payments through a Leibniz Institute (e.g. scholarship holders, doctoral researchers hired through graduate schools of universities) are excluded from these statistics. The Leibniz Association systematically monitors and evaluates the development of gender ratios and the measures to increase the proportion of female researchers at all career levels.

Possible actions: While the law clearly forbids discrimination based on sex or gender, the measures defined in other laws focus on equal opportunities of women and men, and completely neglect persons who identify outside these binary categories. True gender diversity fosters equal opportunities for persons of all genders in all aspects of human society. It is crucial that this aspect is added in the framework of diversity and inclusion.

There should be clear rules and complaint and protection mechanisms in cases of sexual harassment for any gender. Persons with non-binary genders need to be able to define which personal pronouns they would like for themselves [15]. Actively asking for everyone’s choices rather than assuming them e.g. based on a person’s first name is best practice. In written communication often Mr. or Mrs. is used in greetings or Dear ladies and gentlemen. This should be replaced by more inclusive wording (e.g. using first and second name, academic titles instead of Mr./Mrs., Dear members of..., avoiding gendered pronouns by using plural forms).

2.7 Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction or lack of attraction to people of certain genders [16]. Sexual orientation can take many forms, e.g. exclusive attraction to the same gender or to a certain different gender as well as various degrees of attractions to various genders or no attraction at all. Sexual orientation also refers to a person’s sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviours and membership of a community of others who share those attractions. Examples are the vivid and active communities of persons self-identifying as LGBTQ+ or LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, plus others; see [15]).

Since sexual orientation is highly sensitive personal information defined as a special category of personal data by the [General Data Protection Regulation](#) Art. 9, data on a sexual orientation can only be collected with the explicit consent of the person and a clearly specified purpose. Thus, it is not recorded by employers.

We need to ensure an open organisational culture without bias or prejudice, in which no one has to hide or justify their sexual identity or orientation. A person’s sexual orientation must not play any negative role in any work context. Discriminations based on sexual orientation are forbidden by law (§ 1 AGG).

Possible actions: People should be free to acknowledge their sexual orientation without fear that it could lead to exclusion or discrimination at work. This may be fostered by trainings against unconscious

bias and for bystander intervention. In social interactions in the workplace heterosexual partnership should not be automatically assumed. This can be reflected in the wording of documents (e.g. invitations to events where partners are welcome or in forms requiring information on parentage).

2.8 Social background

Social background is complex and multi-layered dimension combining the socio-economic situation of the family or environment a person grew up in, e.g. the education and income of the parents, as well as youth socialisation and education [17]. It has a strong influence on educational and career development opportunities. This information is sensitive and not available to employers.

Often, people do not have access to resources such as networks, assets, education, or social potency because of their social upbringing. As a result, many people do not obtain jobs that are appropriate for their talents and abilities. In academia, a person with non-academic background will have to learn things that are obvious to others [18]. The increasing internationalisation further enhances the difference in social opportunities and education. Academia is known for providing insecure career paths with phases of precarious income situations [19]. Persons from less affluent backgrounds will be less likely to choose such careers or persist in it. A doctoral candidate without savings or financial family backup will have to submit a thesis at the end of the contract and take the next job available, while a more affluent candidate might spend some unpaid time on developing the thesis to a higher qualitative level and can afford to wait for better positions afterwards.

Possible actions: Academic employers should ensure that persons independent of their social background can adequately finish their qualifications and projects, e.g. by ensuring that project goals are suited to the projects or contracts time span. Creating mentorship options is another recommended practice to support persons with non-academic backgrounds.



Supplement 3: Discrimination

The [German General Equal Treatment Act](#) (AGG) distinguishes between and forbids different forms of discrimination. **Direct (open) discrimination** occurs when one person is treated less favourably than another person is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on grounds of one of the so-called “protected characteristics”: sex and gender, age, nationality, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, disability, sexual orientation. Accordingly, the discriminated persons, or someone they are associated with, may have a specific trait attributed to one of these characteristics. For example, a female applicant is not shortlisted for a physically demanding job because it is generally assumed that females do not have the required physical endurance. The AGG’s protection against discrimination also extends to **indirect discriminations**. “Indirect discrimination happens when there is a policy that applies in the same way for everybody but disadvantages a certain group of people” [4]. Examples are scheduled training events on a Saturday (which is a religious holiday for members of certain religious communities) or exclusively during school vacations or outside core working hours (which will hinder persons with care obligations).

Individual discrimination refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate discrimination of certain groups. Individual discrimination can be deliberate, or the individuals may act to perpetuate or support this discrimination without knowing that is what they are doing (unconscious bias) [5].

Institutional discrimination refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different groups. The institutional policies may never mention any groups, but their effect creates advantages for privileged and disadvantages for people from underprivileged groups. If these policies and practices span beyond the institution to the rules and norms of society at large, this is **structural discrimination**.



Supplement 4: Detecting underrepresentation and monitoring changes

Sex, age, nationality and, on a voluntary basis, also degrees of disability are recorded for all staff members as well as for the general population or target groups and thus statistics can be used to determine underrepresentation of certain groups. This would be an indicator of obstacles or discriminations that need to be removed. Target quotas can be defined for such dimensions, as is the case with the gender dimension in the cascade model. Intersectionality is currently not reflected in the statistics or quotas.

Data for other dimensions of diversity are not and must not be recorded by employers. Some dimensions of diversity may be visible while others are invisible or visible only in certain sub-groups (e.g. headscarves identifying some Muslim women but not men). In some dimensions, a person's property can change over time while being fixed for life in others. In some dimensions, a person can choose their identity, while in others change is difficult or impossible. There is no information e.g. on social background or ethnic origin of the staff members or of the scientific community. Thus, in most dimensions it is not possible to determine if certain groups are underrepresented and no quotas can be defined. What can be done is to actively strive to detect and remove or at least compensate for barriers and obstacles in our recruitment and working environment that exist for certain groups and work towards an atmosphere of appreciation of diversity. For persons belonging visibly to underprivileged groups, special support can be developed. All staff members can be encouraged to identify measures to create equitable opportunities. Such measures should be publicly communicated to enhance the attraction of underprivileged groups.

Persons who feel discriminated should be encouraged to speak up or seek help. Complaint structures and procedures that protect victims and persons reporting discriminations must be established and visible. Statistics generated by the complaint office are important indicators for barriers.



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