

Diversity Strategy and Action Plan of Freie Universität Berlin

2021 – 2026

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The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan documents Freie Universität Berlin's approach and strategy regarding diversity. It defines goals and measures for the period 2021 to 2023 that are both needs-oriented and feasible. This plan serves to provide transparency as well as orientation and support for university employees in their efforts to create a nondiscriminatory and diversity-friendly environment for study, research, and work.

The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan is based on the "Self-Evaluation Report" of Freie Universität Berlin that was prepared in 2020 as part of the Stifterverband's Diversity Audit. It is the result of cooperation between the Vice President for Diversity and Gender Equity, Prof. Dr. Verena Blechinger-Talcott, the Diversity and Gender Controlling Officer, Gabriele Rosenstreich, the Diversity Steering Committee (see Appendix), and other diversity stakeholders at the university. The objectives set forth in the action plan include, in particular, the creation of working structures and other foundations that promote the participation of university employees across all status groups in future diversity processes. Overall, the university is still in the early stages of a systematic review and needs assessment. Over the next two years, the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan will thus serve as the starting point for an organizational development process, which will take place in particular within the context of the Diversity Audit. It supports us to set needs-based objectives and to systematically implement measures to achieve them. We intend to update the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan every four years.

The Executive Board approved this plan on February 16, 2021.

1. Guiding Principle and Mission

Both social responsibility and critical reflection on societal developments are firmly anchored in the self-conception of Freie Universität Berlin. Freie Universität Berlin was founded in 1948 as a reaction to the increasing political influence exerted on what was then called University Unter den Linden. The idea of founding a “free” university received widespread international support, paving the way for Freie Universität to become a university of international standing. Freedom and internationality have determined its development ever since.

The academic ethos of Freie Universität Berlin is determined by three values: Veritas, Iustitia, Libertas – Truth, Justice, and Liberty. True to these guiding principles, in its 2013 Diversity Mission Statement, Freie Universität Berlin emphasizes the value of different perspectives, life situations, and experience as well as the goal of creating a barrier- and discrimination-free environment for teaching, learning, and working. Accordingly, the equitable participation of all university members is part of the university’s canon of values. Freie Universität Berlin also accepts its social responsibility in relation to research and teaching in an open and pluralistic city, and strives to contribute to educational equity and academic excellence.

In accordance with its founding principles and guiding concepts, its canon of values, and its profile, Freie Universität Berlin assumes responsibility for recognizing and promoting diversity and for identifying, self-critically reflecting on, and dismantling exclusion mechanisms that stand in the way. The Diversity Mission Statement serves as a jumping-off point for the university’s diversity strategy. The decision to participate in the two-year organizational development process Diversity Audit of the Stifterverband – “Shaping Diversity” (2020–2023) – represents a binding commitment by Freie Universität to address the issue of diversity and to agree on a university-wide organizational structure that supports diversity. This attests to the strategic value we at Freie Universität assign to the field of diversity.

With the founding of the Berlin University Alliance, Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin have established the long-term goal of jointly creating and shaping an integrated research environment in Berlin. In 2019 the German federal and state governments provided funding for an initial period of seven years, in the context of the Excellence Strategy. One of the core goals of the Berlin University Alliance is the promotion of diversity and gender equity as a cross-cutting theme.

2. Initial Situation

Freie Universität is one of eleven German universities that have been successful in all three funding streams of the Excellence Initiative of the German federal and state governments; it has held the status of an Excellence University since 2007.

As a comprehensive state university with twelve departments and four central institutes, Freie Universität Berlin offers 73 undergraduate and 105 master's degree programs in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and human and veterinary medicine.¹

Even though 'diversity' is a relatively new term in higher education policy in Germany, Freie Universität Berlin has demonstrated a long and successful commitment to promoting an approach that values diversity and reduces inequalities. Along with enforcing the measures related to diversity that are already enshrined in law – such as appointing interest groups and representatives – the university already implements its own measures in many areas, both for and with all status groups, as numerous awards attest, such as the Diversity Seal of the Total E-Quality Award (2017)² and the Family-Friendly University Audit (regularly since 2007). Freie Universität Berlin commenced participation in the Diversity Audit of the Stifterverband in 2020.

Statistical Data

As of December 31, 2020, Freie Universität Berlin had **33,390 students** and **3,712 doctoral students**. **5,573 full-time employees** were employed at Freie Universität, of whom **2,853 were in the academic sector** (418 professors, 121 visiting, substitute, and senior professors, and 2,314 research assistants) and **2,720 in the academic support sector**.³

For a long time now, data relevant to diversity work has been collected both in university statistics and in student surveys. However, there are many gaps in the data, and Freie Universität is still in the early stages of systematically evaluating the existing quantitative and qualitative diversity data.⁴ One of the objectives of the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan is to strengthen the data basis with regard to diversity (Objective 1.4, see below). The plan includes the targeted processing and analysis of data as well as the development of monitoring tools and procedures (Measures 1.4.1, 1.4.3). The following is a selection of the available data on the composition of the university.

¹ In addition, there is the Department of Human Medicine at Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin, a joint institution of Freie Universität Berlin and Humbolt-Universität zu Berlin. However, the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan does not take this department into consideration.

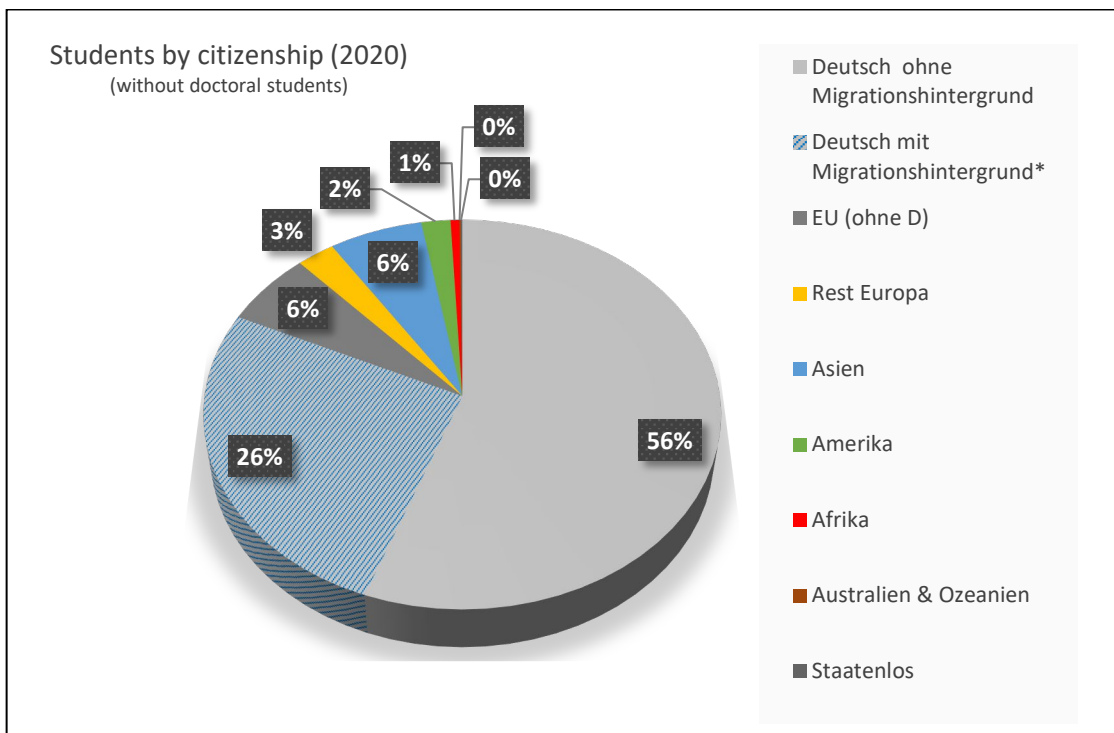
² The renewal application will be submitted in 2021.

³ Unless otherwise noted, the presented data is taken from the university statistics of Freie Universität Berlin, current as of December 31, 2020.

⁴ Freie Universität's internal reporting system enables the provision, monitoring, and analysis of quantitative data in particular. In addition to official university statistics, central surveys and individual project evaluations can be used to examine diversity-related issues, in particular the central bachelor's, master's, exmatriculated, and graduate surveys of the Center for Quality in Teaching and Study and the University Health Report produced by the Division of Public Health. There has not yet been an across-the-board inclusion of diversity issues in surveys or a survey of students and/or employees of the university focused on diversity issues.

Students

- The percentage of bachelor’s students with a **disability and/or chronic illness** is estimated to be about 12 percent.⁵ Approximately 25 percent of students surveyed in 2019 reported suffering from depressive syndrome and 30 percent reported suffering from generalized anxiety disorder.⁶
- The proportion of students (excluding doctoral students) with German **citizenship** roughly corresponds to that of the Berlin population (82%). Of the students without German citizenship (6,007 persons), 84 percent acquired their university entrance qualification outside Germany, while 16 percent completed their secondary education in Germany. The number of bachelor’s students whose families immigrated to Germany (29%) is higher than the nationwide percentage in first degree programs (23%).⁷ Sixty-three percent of doctoral students have German citizenship.



* Estimate according to the Survey of Bachelor’s Students in 2015

- Eighty-seven percent of all bachelor’s students surveyed in 2015 stated that German is their native or **first language**.⁸

⁵ Source: Survey of Bachelor’s Students 2015.

⁶ Source: University Health Report 2019.

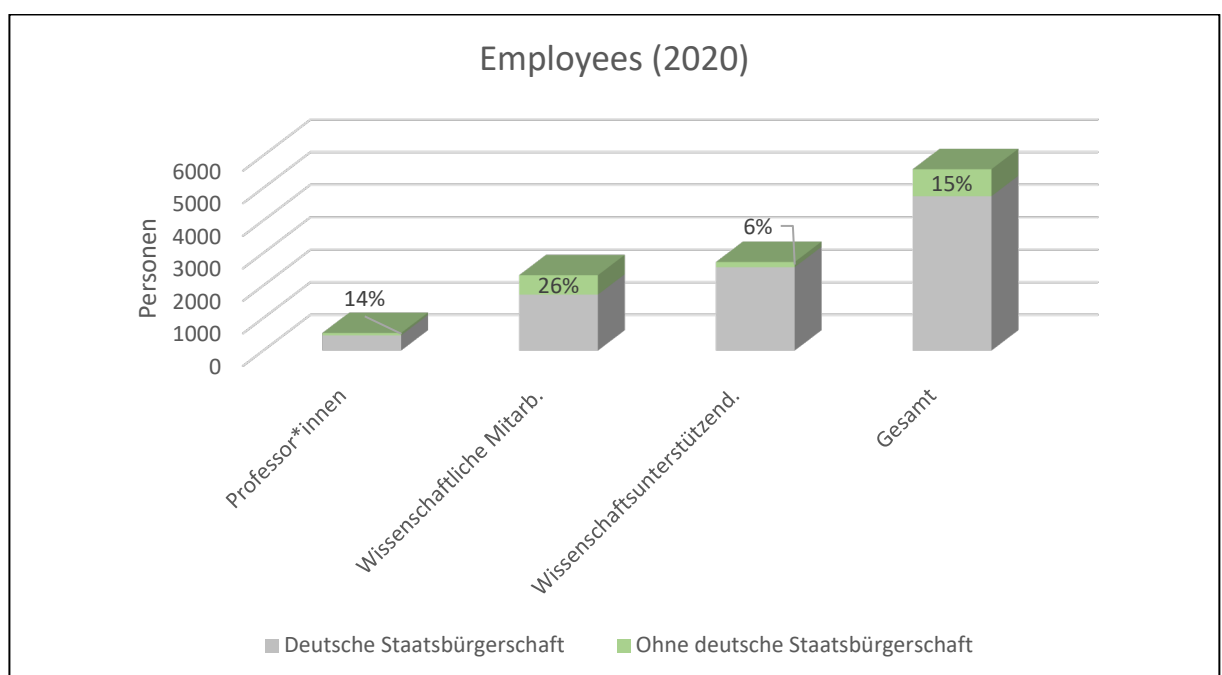
⁷ Source: Survey of Bachelor’s Students 2015. German citizenship was held by 91% of respondents with a “migration background” and 88% reported that they were born in Germany. According to the German Federal Statistical Office, a person has a “migration background” if they and/or at least one parent were not born with German citizenship. A total of 35% of Berlin residents and 15% of German citizens in Berlin have a migration background as per that definition (as of June 30, 2020; Berlin-Brandenburg Office for Statistics, Statistics Report AI5-hj 1/20, p. 10). Please note: Data on people whose families immigrated to Germany does not indicate ethnic background and/or possible racist attributions and thus experiences of discrimination. It only relates to the diversity dimension of nationality.

⁸ Source: Survey of Bachelor’s Students 2015.

- The majority of students surveyed in 2019 reported being in the “upper-middle” class as their subjective **social status**.⁹
- **University entrance qualification** is sometimes used as a possible proxy indicator (among other things) for social background, but it is not synonymous with it. Students with a general university entrance qualification gained at school form the largest group at Freie Universität with 83 percent; by contrast, the proportion of students with a subject-related entrance qualification is very low, at less than one percent, as is the proportion of vocationally qualified students (without a high school diploma/Abitur), which accounts for about one percent of the total number of students.
- The proportion of women among the students is 61 percent. Four individuals had their **gender marker** entered as “diverse” (nonbinary) by the end of 2020. Among doctoral students, 56 percent are women. Only one doctoral student had their gender marker entered as “diverse” by the end of 2020.
- The majority of students surveyed in 2019 reported not having **children** (95%).¹⁰ In 2015, five percent of the bachelor’s students surveyed reported being (co-)responsible for the **care** of family members.¹¹

Employees

- In 2019, 3.7 percent of employees had a **severe disability** (as defined in Section 2.1 of the German Social Insurance Code IX).
- Approximately 85 percent of the total of 5,573 employees have German **citizenship** (2019: 77%).



⁹ Source: [University Health Report 2019](#). Students’ subjective social status is measured by the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status, with reference to several indicators (income, level of education, job) and the household in which they grew up (scale 1-10). The percentage of students who rank their household of origin at the lowest or highest scale value is very low (2.2%). Compared to the nationwide survey of students in Germany, students at Freie Universität Berlin report a significantly higher subjective social status (mean value of 6.3 vs. 6.1 nationally).

¹⁰ Source: [University Health Report 2019](#).

¹¹ Source: [Survey of Bachelor’s Students 2015](#).

- The proportion of women among the employees is 55 percent. So far, no employee is documented in the university's data system with the **gender marker** "diverse" (nonbinary).
- The largest group of employees is between 30 and 34 years old (18%), with academic staff significantly more represented in this **age group** (26%) than academic support staff (11%), whose highest proportion falls in the 55 to 59 age group (16%).

Diversity Actions

Freie Universität Berlin combines the academic study of (aspects of) diversity in research and teaching with the concrete implementation of diversity within the university. We have already initiated a wide range of more than 400 diversity-oriented measures and services in all fields of action, a large number of which have already been completed. All of the measures mentioned in the following discussion are thus merely exemplary.

Freie Universität Berlin has successfully implemented a variety of initiatives to support the development of gender- and diversity-conscious university teaching. In addition to the wide range of courses in the field of "Gender and Diversity" (50 to 100 courses in the curriculum per semester),¹², for example, in the consecutive master's program in "Gender, Intersectionality, and Politics,"¹³ the "Gender and Diversity Competence" competence area in the general professional skills courses, and the Toolbox – Gender and Diversity in Teaching.¹⁴ Research-oriented work areas focusing on diversity have also been established, for example, the Gender & Diversity Division at the Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science (2018).¹⁵

The measures thus far have focused primarily on gender, but there are also some measures related to other dimensions of diversity. For example, in the Welcome@FUBerlin program, which was established in 2015, prospective refugee students have received language and preparatory courses that are family friendly, as well as support from student volunteers. Freie Universität Berlin supports refugee scholars to continue their research in exile by participating in the international programs Academics in Solidarity and Academy in Exile (since 2017), and in cooperation with the organization Scholars at Risk (since 2011). The Dual Career & Family Service offers a monthly memory screening for university members that helps them to distinguish normal aging processes from dementia. Several lecture halls are equipped with audio transmission for hearing aid users via wifi and a mobile phone app. The "School and Anti-Semitism" workshop provides students in teacher training programs insight into this subject, as well as materials for the prevention of anti-Semitism to use later in everyday school life.¹⁶ The Fund for Female Scientists in Laboratory Subjects supports participation during pregnancy and breastfeeding, as well as returning to a career after maternity and parental leave, by providing material

¹² The AGENDA directory collates all courses related to gender, diversity, and queer studies.

¹³ Since the winter semester 2019/2020 in the Gender & Diversity Division at the Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science.

¹⁴ This resource offers a digital toolbox with subject-specific as well as cross-disciplinary suggestions. Teachers can also learn more about the tool and its use in workshops and webinars.

¹⁵ In addition, there are research projects with a focus on specific issues relevant to diversity, such as the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies (established 2007); Social Cohesion in Times of Crisis: The Corona Pandemic and Anti-Asian Racism in Germany (2020); and The Homosexual Movement and the Legal System in the Federal Republic 1949–2002 (2018–2020).

¹⁶ Within the framework of the Teacher Training Plus Program at Dahlem School of Research: Student Teacher Workshop (August 2020).

and personnel resources to finance additional measures.¹⁷ As part of Berlin Pride Week, the rainbow flag has been raised on campus since 2018 to take a stand against homophobia and transphobia, along with relevant posts to Freie Universität's social media accounts.

There are also some cross-target measures. The Code of Conduct for Digital Teaching (2020) sets out rules in the event of discrimination in connection with online teaching, and in the Appointment Regulations (2018), a paragraph on equal opportunities and diversity places an obligation on every appointment committee to act in a discrimination-sensitive manner (and to take specific action in the event that women are underrepresented). The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan includes measures to promote this sensitivity (Measure 1.8.1). At the decentralized level, some institutions, for example, the Institute for Latin American Studies and the Dahlem School of Education, have established student assistant positions with a focus on easily accessible diversity counseling.

The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan includes plans to develop a database of diversity measures (Measure 1.4.1) in order to strengthen the university's diversity-related availability of data (Objective 1.4). Data collection began as early as 2020, in conjunction with the assessment process leading up to the development of the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan. The database should promote synergies while also providing a more differentiated view and a deeper understanding of success factors in relation to individual measures, which in turn will serve the evaluation of future measures and quality assurance.

Legal Framework

The university's baseline situation includes the external structures in which it is embedded, especially legislation. Freie Universität embraces the increased importance of guarding against discrimination and valuing and promoting diversity in Germany, which is increasingly also explicitly regulated by law. In addition to the general prohibition of discrimination, mandated by Germany's Basic Law (Article 3), a number of federal and state regulations play an important role. In addition to the equality/inclusion mandate (e.g., LGG, LGBG, SGB IX) and the obligation of accessibility (BIKTG), the Berlin State Anti Discrimination Act 2020 (LADG) provides protections against discrimination that extend beyond the university's previous responsibilities as an employer under the General Act on Equal Treatment 2006 (AGG) to include an explicit responsibility towards students.¹⁸ It also expands the catalog of the previously established six discrimination categories (see the AGG) to include the categories of social status, language, and chronic illness, and makes it clear that the categories are intertwined and that discrimination is usually multidimensional.¹⁹

¹⁷ With funding from the Female Professors Program III of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, initially established in 2020 as a two-year pilot at the Department of Physics and the Department of Biology, Chemistry, and Pharmacy.

¹⁸ The LADG also supplements the previously established six discrimination categories of the AGG with social status, language, and chronic illness. It explicitly notes that these categories are intertwined and that discrimination is usually multidimensional.

¹⁹ Discrimination is usually not exclusively related to a single "reason," but it exists and is experienced in a complex interaction of intersectional, interconnected affiliations and disadvantageous structures. The combination of the categories in Section 2 LADG with an "as well as" (instead of an "or" as in Section 1 AGG) is intended to raise awareness of the multidimensional nature of discrimination (Berlin House of Representatives. Submission for resolution on the State Anti-Discrimination Law (LADG)), printed 18/1996, June 12, 2019. Rationale p. 19).

The Berlin Higher Education Act (BerlHG) forbids all members of the university to discriminate against anyone (Section 44.1).²⁰ The planned amendment to the BerlHG in 2021 is expected to bring new requirements in the area of anti-discrimination. The 2018 change in personal status law (which established four options for recording gender) also impacts the university.

The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan must implement the relevant changes in the law at Freie Universität Berlin. The measures apply current legal prohibitions of discrimination and protection at Freie Universität and extend them in accordance with Freie Universität's mission statement.

Current Working Structures

Freie Universität Berlin has examined and analysed the concept of diversity, and diversity has been anchored in the organization since the creation of a position for Gender and Diversity Controlling in the Office of Strategic Planning and Reporting in 2011 (a half-time position). In 2012, the university developed its Diversity Mission Statement as an extension of its guiding principles in a participatory process (adopted by the Executive Board in 2013). The Executive Board's schedule of responsibilities includes responsibility for diversity, as well as for gender equity.

In 2017, a diversity governance structure was introduced with the establishment of a "Diversity Network Steering Committee" to comprehensively address the issue of diversity at Freie Universität. The governance structure was expanded in 2020 in order to promote the systematic structuring and networking of all actors and activities in this field (see below). Their implementation, evaluation, and reinforcement are further goals of this plan.

As of March 1, 2020, the Diversity and Gender Controlling position has been refilled and realigned with a focus on diversity (one full-time position). As a specialized unit, it advises and supports the Executive Board in the university's strategic positioning and operational development on issues related to diversity, including gender. Among other things, the position's scope of responsibility includes the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan, as well as the coordination of diversity-related processes such as the diversity audit and diversity-related information/data.

Furthermore, there are various working structures relevant to diversity at Freie Universität Berlin that focus on specific dimensions of diversity. In addition to the well-established gender equity structures at both central and decentralized levels, there are some other working structures already in place, particularly with regard to the dimensions of "disability, chronic illness, and health impairment" and "socio-familial contexts." These structures include, on the one hand, representative functions enshrined in law (Representative for Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses and Representatives for Staff with Disabilities) and on the other hand, central specialized offices that have been established on the university's own initiative: the Office for Students with Disabilities²¹ and the Dual Career & Family Service.²²

Currently, targeted anti-discrimination structures at the university exist to only a limited extent. Contact and support structures are available for all status groups only in relation to the dimension of gender (including sexual violence) and to a lesser extent in relation to the dimension of disability. For

²⁰ In addition, there are the regulations on equal opportunities for the genders (Section 5a BerlHG), for women's representatives (Section 59 BerlHG), and for students with disabilities (Section 4 BerlHG).

²¹ In Division V: Academic Affairs within the central university administration.

²² In Division I: Personnel within the central university administration. Grew out of the Family Office, which was established in 2007.

employees, a staff member in the Human Resources Department has been assigned the function of a complaints office in accordance with Section 13 AGG, and there are staff representatives. In addition, there are centralized and decentralized general counseling and complaint structures at Freie Universität that may be able to serve as points of contact in cases of discrimination, such as psychological counseling for students at the Student Services Center. However, there is no guarantee that these units always have the appropriate expertise. The General Students' Committee (AStA) has its own services in the form of peer counseling and advocacy for students with respect to disability, gender, sexual orientation, racial discrimination, and marital status. These points of contact operate autonomously, without formal integration into university structures (and thus do not fulfill the university's responsibilities related to diversity and anti-discrimination).

The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan places high priority on the systematic documentation and publicizing of services (Measure 1.3.1) and the development of a model for robust working structures in the field of diversity/discrimination that strengthen the effectiveness of the various measures and services, including counseling and complaints (Measure 1.3.3). A diversity portal will be set up on the university's central website to further increase the visibility of diversity issues and activities and facilitate access to existing resources and support services (Measure 1.6.1).

Diversity Governance Structure

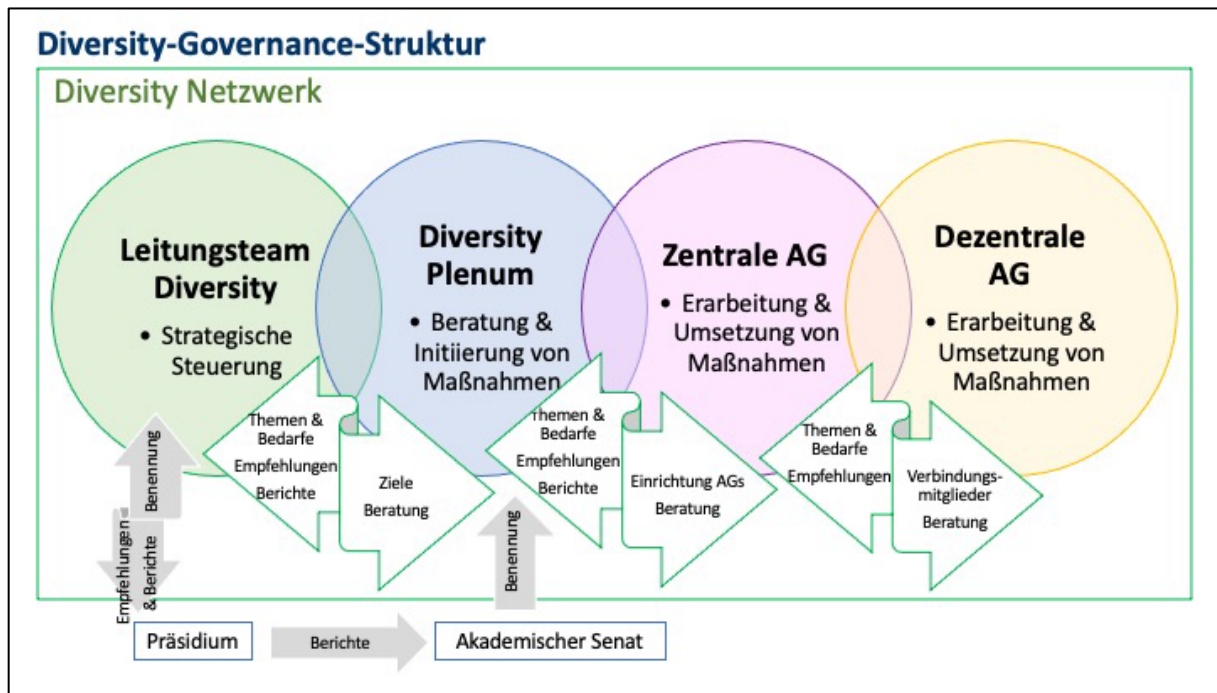
Freie Universität's diversity strategy includes a structure that provides the framework for working to achieve its goals. Against the background of the various activities in the field of diversity and also in view of the large number of stakeholders involved, the need to expand the governance structure in this field has increased. This is intended to systematically consolidate strengths, while at the same time giving them greater visibility. The governance structure regulates the committees, roles, procedures, decision-making power, and relationships between the many stakeholders and supports the work of the functionaries in the field of diversity.²³ The aim is to create a structure that ensures a high degree of transparency, combines a top-down with a bottom-up approach, and fosters broad participation by relevant stakeholders from all status groups (on equal footing) as well as the Executive Board.²⁴ A total of 36 university employees from all status groups are involved as members of the Diversity Steering Committee, as well as their alternates (see Appendix). In addition, there are numerous central (whole of university) and departmental working groups set up as needed to develop and implement individual measures. The active participation of the responsible member of the Executive Board in the Diversity Steering Committee and in working groups demonstrates how diversity is firmly established as a strategic management task. The Gender Equality Officer, the Representatives for Employees with Disabilities, the Representative for Students with Disabilities in accordance with the Berlin Higher Education Act, and the Staff Council work intensively as interest representatives in the governance structures (so that work on diversity benefits from the many years of experience and pre-existing instruments in the area of equal opportunities). The governance structure is also intended to ensure

²³ Currently Diversity and Gender Controlling and the Executive Board member responsible for diversity.

²⁴ In accordance with the results of the research project commissioned by the Executive Board from the Gender & Diversity Division at the Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science on the need for and understanding of diversity within the central administration and on diversity strategies at international universities (2018–2019). The organizational culture of Freie Universität Berlin suggests an understanding of diversity policy as a process in which specific problems, needs, and appropriate activities are identified decentrally at the level of the departments and from the perspective of various working groups, administrative units, and status groups (bottom-up approach), while at the same time all activities are consolidated and controlled centrally (top-down approach). Such a governance approach takes into account the expectation that members of Freie Universität will contribute their expertise to facilitate the implementation of the diversity strategy.

open cooperation between the various bodies, ensure the flow of communication, and provide a bridge for the tension between broad participation and the bodies' ability to function.

A preliminary expansion and strengthening of the existing structures took place in 2020 (Executive Board Resolution of April 21, 2020). The new diversity governance structure consists of a Diversity Steering Committee, a Diversity Council, and central and decentralized working groups. One change to the existing structures is the legitimization of the members of the Diversity Council through the nomination of members by the status groups in the Academic Senate (see Appendix). The stakeholders collectively form the diversity network.



The newly established Diversity Steering Committee took up their work in June 2020, and the Diversity Council and initial working groups began their work in February 2021.

The governance structure has already proven to be a suitable framework for organizational development and the development of the diversity strategy. It contributes to transparency and networking within the university as well as to raising awareness and sensitivity for the topic of diversity. The structure will be evaluated in the course of the implementation of the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan and adjusted if necessary (Objective 1.2).

Governance Tools

The successful implementation of the diversity strategy depends on its interconnection with the university's existing governance instruments.²⁵ In particular, the following selection of tools can be used effectively to shape the diversity strategy:

²⁵ The Higher Education Contract is also relevant in this context as a control instrument, although Freie Universität exerts little influence over it; the Higher Education Contract should therefore be viewed more as a framework. The current contract with Freie Universität (2018–2022) stipulates that the university shall counter discrimination in any form. Freie Universität has thereby committed itself to developing a diversity strategy and policies. The negotiation process for the new Higher Education Contract is expected to begin in 2021. We expect that diversity and anti-discrimination issues will be taken into consideration.

- Target agreements,
- Formulation of a mission statement,²⁶
- Plans for personnel development and subsequent measures,
- Performance-based funding allocation (in part),
- Programs supporting women (for the diversity dimensions of gender and gender identity).

We are developing appropriate monitoring procedures for our work on diversity.

Inter-University Networking

Networking and cooperation both within and beyond the university enables and supports the exchange of experience and information that is indispensable for needs-based, effective diversity work. It also creates a foundation for building effective coalitions and cooperative agreements to reduce structural disadvantages. This is because the creation of structural equity should, as far as possible, not be limited to a single institution, but should always aim to change the higher education landscape and the social context as well.

Freie Universität is a member of several diversity-related alliances²⁷ and actively participates in relevant local, national, and international networks.²⁸ For example, within the framework of the Diversity & Gender Equality Steering Committee of the Berlin University Alliance (BUA), Freie Universität is developing a systematic strategy for the promotion of diversity (research) and diversity related standards to be implemented, for example, through the establishment of the Diversity and Gender Equality Network for Diversity Researchers (DiGENet, established 2020), through the promotion of junior research groups, and through visiting professorships. We are striving to connect Freie Universität's diversity strategy with BUA's diversity activities. This is being achieved through, among other things, the participation of a member of the Diversity Steering Committee in the BUA's Diversity & Gender Equality Steering Committee and the location of the DiGENet coordination office at Freie Universität in the Margherita von Brentano Center.

Freie Universität Berlin, as an international network university, has had many years of experience and a wide range of partnerships that can benefit diversity work. Within the framework of the Diversity Council in the UNA Europe Network, for example, Freie Universität is leading an international working group on diversity data collection (1Europe project, 2020–2023).

²⁶ Diversity is already embedded in the university's guiding principles as a mission statement. A review and renewal of the guiding principles is planned for 2021.

²⁷ For example, the Alliance against Homophobia, Open-minded Universities against Xenophobia (German Rectors' Conference (HRK)). Freie Universität is also a signatory of the Diversity Charter for diversity in the working world and the Family in Higher Education Charter, among others.

²⁸ For example, at the state level, the State Conference of Gender Equality Officers at Berlin Universities and the working group of Officers for Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses, "People with Disabilities in Higher Education and Science," under the auspices of the Senate Chancellery for Science and Research. At the national level, Freie Universität is an active member, for example, of the Vice President Diversity Network, the Diversity Network at Universities, and the Anti-discrimination Network at Universities. In addition, there are other networks with a focus on specific dimensions and tasks related to diversity, for example, the Equal Opportunity Controlling at Universities Network, the Federal Conference of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunity Officers at Universities (bukof), and within this, among others, the bukof Commission for Queer Equality Policy at Universities, networking on barrier-free studies via the Studying with Disabilities – Information and Advice Center (IBS) of German National Association for Student Affairs - DSW, the Success Factor Family Network, the Family in the University e. V., and the Dual Career Network Germany.

3. Understanding Diversity

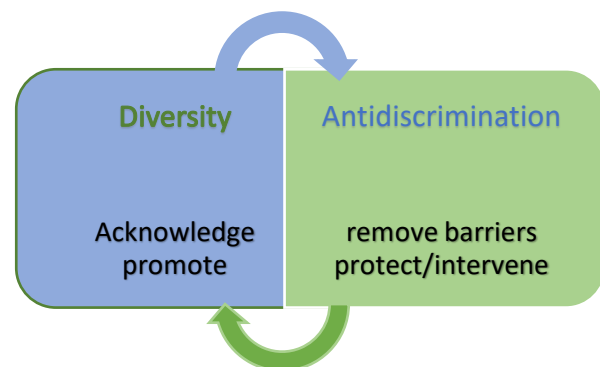
Freie Universität's diversity strategy builds on an **understanding of diversity** that recognizes and values multidimensional differences between people based on various social categories and takes into account their linkage with intersectional, meaning interlocking, unequal relationships or discrimination structures. In the spirit of the obligation of all university members to treat each other fairly²⁹ and in the spirit of the guiding principles and canon of values, as well as the university's function as a model of social responsibility, Freie Universität pursues the following interlocking, action-oriented, and overarching **diversity objectives**:

- the equitable participation of all university members regardless of the specific dimensions of or social categories that pertain to them,
- an accessible and nondiscriminatory environment for teaching, learning, and working,
- a cooperative approach that values all status groups,
- the sustainable implementation of structural equality of opportunity.³⁰

The central approach of the diversity strategy is **the recognition and promotion of diversity**, combined with **critical (self-)reflection and the dismantling of exclusionary mechanisms** that stand in the way of diversity (including equitable participation). This essentially means that we understand diversity and anti-discrimination as two sides of the same coin.

On the basis of the new Berlin State Anti Discrimination Act (2020) and the Diversity Mission Statement, the following ten **dimensions of diversity** are considered core to Freie Universität's diversity strategy:³¹

- Gender, including gender identity³²,
- Sexual orientation,
- Age.
- Ethnic origin and/or racist or anti-Semitic attribution (migration history is also taken into account here³³),



²⁹ All university members have the obligation to “behave in such a way that no one is discriminated against because of their gender, sexual identity, race, ethnic origin, religion or world view, disability, or age” (Berlin Higher Education Act Section 44.1.3).

³⁰ Achieving these goals also has positive effects on, for example, quality, innovative capacity, and the recruitment and retention of employees.

³¹ In accordance with the LADG and the Diversity Mission Statement of Freie Universität Berlin.

³² “Gender identity encompasses physical and social gender and is based on one’s own sense of gender. A person’s gender identity may be different from the gender assigned at birth, especially for transgender people. A person’s gender identity includes gender expression.” Berlin House of Representatives. Submission for resolution on the State Anti-Discrimination Law (LADG), printed 18/1996, June 12, 2019. Rationale p. 22.

³³ Data on people whose families immigrated to Germany is often used as a proxy variable for recording ethnicity and/or racial attribution. This approach is problematic, but thus far there are no established alternatives. In the planned amendment of the existing law regulating participation and integration in Berlin, in the form of the Law for the Promotion of Participation in a Pluralistic Society (PartMigG), persons with an “immigration history” are considered to be persons whose biography includes immigration, persons who suffer racial discrimination, and persons to whom a migration background is attributed according to their own statements. Both terms are used here for this reason. We assume that individual and structural discrimination exists with regard to ethnic origin, racism, and anti-Semitism, but so far there are few relevant contact structures and little knowledge of the initial situation at Freie Universität; this dimension of diversity should

- Nationality,
- Language,
- Religion and/or worldview,
- Social status,
- Disability, chronic illness and/or health impairment,³⁴
- Social and family situation.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive and the dimensions are intertwined, but it still serves as a guide.

therefore be prioritized. Freie Universität's profile as an internationally oriented university also implies that the institution should pay particular attention to racism.

³⁴ This is based on a social model of disability in which disability is understood as a social rather than individual phenomenon, which is why we focus on situations that lead to disability and the interaction between individuals, institutions, and social discourses. This departs from the prevailing view of disability in the medical field as an individual physical deviation from general functional norms that needs to be adjusted.

4. Guiding Principles

The diversity strategy of Freie Universität Berlin is based on the following principles (and areas of tension):

- **A horizontal and intersectional approach** (interlocking diversity dimensions) – yet target specific groups where required;
- Focus on **practices** of inclusion and exclusion – but with strategic reference to identities/belonging where helpful;
- **Building awareness of and dismantling discrimination** – Higher education institutions are part of complex social inclusion and exclusion structures and therefore cannot be completely free of discrimination, but a low-discrimination university can be created by adopting a approach that is sensitive with regard to power;
- Focus on **sustainable structures** (as opposed to individual solutions) – while taking individual experiences into account;
- Reduce **barriers to entry into higher education** and the **structures of disadvantage within higher education**;
- Combining a **top-down** with a **bottom-up** approach;
- A **participatory approach** that integrates the diverse experiences, perspectives, and ideas of university members from all status groups – **with efficient working structures**;
- **Mainstreaming** approach, in which the promotion of diversity is considered a cross-cutting task that is integrated into regular workplaces – intertwined with **specialized units** with expertise and specific tasks;
- **Needs-oriented goal setting** and **target-oriented measures**;
- The **strategic alignment of activities** as a success factor in dealing effectively and sustainably with diversity.

By taking a horizontal, cross-target-group approach we minimize the risk of reproducing and consolidating stereotypical attributions associated with naming specific target groups, and support an intersectional approach. Nonetheless, the university sees the need for targeted strategies and interventions for particular groups because they face specific barriers and have different access to resources, and thus unique needs. A focus on specific target groups makes their disadvantage visible and addressable, and opens up opportunities for remedying disadvantage. A systematic consideration of the specific target groups for whom we are seeking solutions can also feed back into the overarching discussion of how to deal with diversity and the structural embedding of related measures in the university's long-term strategic planning.

The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan has identified individual diversity dimensions that currently require targeted attention in the current Diversity Strategy and Action Plan, in addition to the horizontal measures:

- Disability, chronic illness, and mental health issues,
- Ethnic origin and racist or anti-Semitic attribution, or racism and a history of migration,
- Social status,
- Gender identity, particularly trans, intersex, and non-binary individuals.

The effectiveness of the many and varied stakeholders and diversity activities at Freie Universität will be strengthened through overarching management, structure, consolidation, evaluation, and

monitoring. The overall **strategic focus** with regard to diversity at Freie Universität will therefore focus on the following in the next two years:

- The strategic orientation of activities in the field of diversity,
- Needs assessment, quality assurance, and monitoring,
- Raising awareness of the issue among all university members,
- The development of robust working structures in the field of diversity/discrimination.

These and other priorities are specified as goals below.

5. Interlinking the Diversity Strategy

Interlocking with Vertical Approaches

Diversity is a horizontal approach that encompasses all social categories. Approaches that focus on individual categories/dimensions are referred to as “vertical.” For example, gender-focused equity is a vertical approach.

Existing structures, knowledge, and stakeholders whose focus is on specific dimensions are considered sub-areas of diversity work.

In particular, Freie Universität Berlin’s commitment to the diversity dimension of gender and gender equality will continue to be pursued as an independent element within the university’s overall diversity strategy. The university has decades of experience with dedicated gender equity policies and practices, and as a result has established a variety of successful structures and tools to advance women and reduce gender-based exclusion mechanisms. For example, the university has already been awarded the Total-E-Quality distinction six times for its policies to create equal opportunities between women and men. The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan therefore does not formulate specific goals or targeted measures relating to the dimension of gender per se, but instead refers to the Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan 2021 to 2026, in which specific objectives are defined. However, gender is of course taken into account in the horizontal, overarching goals and measures of the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan, as are all other dimensions of diversity.

Thus, the Equal Opportunity Concept is an element within the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan and is also interlinked with it through the overlapping of some measures: Unconscious bias training for appointment committees and tenure committees, for example, is listed as a measure in the Equal Opportunity Concept designed to systematically promote gender awareness and competence among the university community, and is also listed in the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan (Measure 1.8.1) to achieve the goal of diversity-sensitive hiring and onboarding procedures (Objective 1.8). In the implementation of this measure, we take a horizontal approach, treating gender/sex as one dimension among others.

It is worth mentioning that – in the context of the explicit naming of gender identity as a characteristic in the State Anti-Discrimination Act, as well as the demands formulated by stakeholders inside and outside the university – Freie Universität’s approach to gender has broadened from the differentiation between men and women to a vision of gender justice that is inclusive with regard to gender diversity beyond the binary model. As a result, the needs of trans, intersex, and non-binary people in higher education are increasingly coming into focus. Both the new Equal Opportunity Concept and the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan articulate the goal of strengthening gender self-determination (Objective 5). However, since the field of gender identity has not yet been established as part of Freie Universität’s equal opportunity work, it is currently being dealt with mainly in the context of the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan.

Various plans, target agreements, and structures already exist not only for gender, but also for other dimensions. For example, family-friendly policies and promoting the compatibility of work, study, and family are the responsibility of the [Dual Career & Family Service](#). Freie Universität has successfully participated in the Family-Friendly University Audit every three years since 2007. The last re-audit phase of the consolidation in 2020 led to the conclusion that family-friendly study and working conditions are institutionalized at a high level and are being further developed in a needs-oriented

manner. The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan therefore does not formulate any specific goals or measures with regard to the dimension of socio-familial situations either, but refers to the strategy and the **Family-Friendly University Action Program** as an independent element within the university's overarching diversity strategy.

In both horizontal and vertical approaches, we understand the dimensions and categories from an intersectional perspective as interlocking, meaning intertwined. For example, in counseling services for persons with disabilities (vertical approach), it is important to consider linkages with other dimensions, for example, gender, age, social status, language, and racial attribution. This means, for example, taking into account that girls and women with disabilities are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing sexual violence than boys and men with disabilities or girls and women without disabilities. At the same time, many of them face higher barriers to accessing counseling and help for sexual violence than most girls and women without disabilities. These barriers are even higher if, for example, counseling is not provided in a language the person can speak. The interconnection of categories, and thus inequality/power structures, influences the experiences and material and social resources available to a person. In recognizing diversity, it is important to acknowledge the complex and dynamic realities of life and appropriately address them in diversity-related work, even if the focus of the work is on a particular social category.

For the university's diversity strategy, this means, among other things, that awareness-raising and working structures that enable good networking among the university's many diversity stakeholders are indispensable, because comprehensive expertise at every point of contact with regard to all dimensions of diversity and inequality is not a realistic goal.

Interlocking with Other Strategies

The university understands diversity as a cross-cutting task, and thus it is important to embed diversity work in other strategic university processes that are not focused on diversity-related issues.

For example, the Office for Diversity and Gender Controlling was involved in the consultation process for the development of the **Sustainability Strategy** 2020 (linked in particular to the Sustainable Development Goals #5 Gender Equality and #10 Reduce Inequalities) and the **International Strategy** 2021-2025 (connected in particular to the diversity dimensions of language and nationality as well as racism).

Some measures overlap here as well. For example, the Sustainability Strategy 2020 lists the development of a Diversity Strategy and Action Plan in the category of governance and participation.

Still other strategies relate more to areas of action rather than substantive issues. In this context, we should mention in particular the **Teaching and Education in 2030** strategy, which will be developed from 2020 to 2021 and in which a working group will specifically address diversity as a cross-cutting issue. Effective interlinking is ensured through coordination at the leadership level and through the participation of Diversity Council members in the working group.

In the spirit of mainstreaming, consultations provide support in taking diversity issues into account, for example, in the development of uniform user regulations for the library system of Freie Universität Berlin in 2020.

6. Objectives and Measures

Freie Universität Berlin is striving to pursue the following interlocking **objectives** with its diversity strategy:

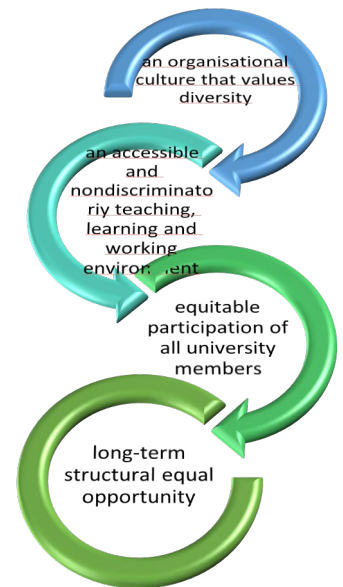
- An organizational culture that values diversity and fosters mutually respectful cooperation among all status groups,
- An accessible and nondiscriminatory teaching, learning, and working environment,
- The equitable participation of all university members regardless of their positioning within various diversity dimensions or social categories,
- Long-term structural equal opportunity.

Despite having implemented a large number of diversity-oriented services and measures, Freie Universität has not yet succeeded in systematically focussing and structuring its approach to achieving these objectives. The university's **strategic focus** until the end of 2023 is therefore:

- The implementation of a Diversity Strategy and Action Plan -> strategic orientation of diversity measures,
- Strengthening the data basis -> needs assessment, quality assurance and monitoring,
- Raising awareness of the issue among all members of the university community -> strengthening the foundation to assess needs and develop and implement measures,
- The development and implementation of robust measures to reduce and stop discrimination -> expansion of working structures and services in the field of diversity/anti-discrimination.

Objectives, measures, and **areas of activity** are interlinked and thus cannot be precisely distinguished. The area of "Strategy and Structure" will be a special focus for Freie Universität in the next two years, in order to be able to concentrate the numerous and diverse measures through an appropriate strategic and structural process and make them more effective in the long term.

The following concrete goals were formulated on the basis of a situation analysis, the profile of Freie Universität, the current state of research,³⁵ and by drawing on good practice examples from other universities. These goals should be attained by the end of 2023. Measures to achieve these goals are also noted.



³⁵ Among other things, [the Gender & Diversity Division](#) at the [Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science](#) conducted research in 2018 and 2019 on diversity structures at Freie Universität that provided valuable information. The results showed that reliance on personal relationships, lack of transparency, lack of information, and lack of formal exchange formats and designated responsibilities were particularly problematic. They identified problems such as a lack of resources, an unsatisfactory complaint process, and lack of data. The results of this research have already been taken into account in the further development of governance structures, for example, the tension between the desire for top-down requirements versus the desire for self-determination.

Universal Goals

<i>Area of Activity</i>	Aims	Measures [Lead]
<i>Strategy & Structure</i>	1.1 The principles, strategic direction, and needs-based priorities of the university's diversity work are known to all university members	1.1.1 Publicizing the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan [SPB3]
	1.2 Diversity governance structure is functional, and it is known what modifications are required	1.2.1 Implementation of the governance structure adopted on April 21, 2020 [SPB3] 1.2.2 Participatory evaluation of governance structure [SPB3] 1.2.3 Develop a resolution for the Executive Board for the future governance structure [SPB3]
	1.3 There is a robust model for needs-based diversity/anti discrimination structures, including prevention/support, counseling, and complaint management	1.3.1 Inventory and publication of existing services and complaint structures [SPB3] 1.3.2 Training for university stakeholders with an advisory/support function on discrimination (referrals) 1.3.3 Development of a model for working structures in the fields of diversity and anti-discrimination [SPB3] 1.3.4 Creation of a general code of conduct and awareness campaign [SPB3]
	1.4 There is a robust data basis related to diversity	1.4.1 Mapping, consolidation, evaluation, and compilation of quantitative and qualitative diversity data, including a database of diversity measures [SPB3] 1.4.2 Identification and closure of gaps [SPB3] 1.4.3 Development and introduction of monitoring instruments ³⁶ and procedures [SPB3]
<i>Study & Teaching</i>	1.5 Teaching staff are qualified to deliver courses in a diversity sensitive manner	1.5.1 Promoting the use of the Toolbox Gender & Diversity in Teaching among teaching staff [Toolbox] 1.5.2 Integration of diversity in the mission statement for teaching and learning [VP3] 1.5.3 Integration of diversity in the university's educational strategy [VP3]
<i>Internal Communication & Participation</i>	1.6 All university members have low-threshold access to information and services in the field of diversity/anti discrimination	1.6.1 Development and publication of a diversity website [PK/SPB3] 1.6.2 Development and implementation of a communication plan to publicize the diversity work process and opportunities for participation [SPB3]
	1.7 Respect for diversity is visible in the university	1.7.1 Regular publication of items through the online editorial office on current diversity-related occasions [PK]

³⁶ In addition to central monitoring procedures, some departments are already interested in analyzing internal teaching evaluations with regard to awareness of diversity, with the aim of including more items on discrimination and perceptions of discrimination.

		1.7.2 Development of a diversity calendar as a resource for staff [SPB3] 1.7.3 Expansion of the pool of diversity-appropriate images for university communications [PK]
<i>Human Resources</i>	1.8 Recruitment and onboarding processes are sensitive to diversity issues	1.8.1 Development of a resource and training on unconscious bias [SPB3/BBS] 1.8.2 Integration of diversity aspects in onboarding procedures [PE]
	1.9 It is known how employees experience the organizational culture	1.9.1 Conduct a diversity climate study [SPB3]

As explained above, in addition to the horizontal, universal approach, Freie Universität is paying particular attention to four dimensions of diversity in this plan: disability, chronic illness, and mental health impairments; racism and migration background; social status; and gender identity.

Disability, chronic illness, and mental health impairments

Goal: Strengthen communication channels and the application of relevant laws

<i>Area of Activity</i>	Aims	Measures [Lead]
<i>Study & Teaching</i>	2.1 Empowerment of students with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and mental health impairments	2.1.1 Conduct empowerment workshops for students with disabilities and chronic and mental illnesses [SPB3] 2.1.2 Support student peer initiatives, for example, by providing infrastructure [VA] 2.1.3 Needs-based events [VA]
	2.2 All affected students receive provisions for adjustment measures in accordance with applicable legislation	2.2.1 Review of the legal framework (RSPO, SPO) for the provision of adjustment measures with regard to compatibility with higher-ranking law, and development of resources on the provision of adjustment measures for examination offices [VA]
<i>Internal Communication & Participation</i>	2.3 University members are aware of the topic of disability and chronic and mental illness	2.3.1 Publish social media posts and articles on relevant topics, in particular on international days related to disability and chronic and mental illnesses [VA/SPB3]
	2.4 Students with disabilities and/or chronic and mental illnesses have low-threshold access to information and support services	2.4.1 Establish and publish a newsletter for students [VA] 2.4.2 Revise the website and flyer for the Office for Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses [VA] 2.4.3 Hold regular events, for example, orientation sessions [VA]
	2.5 Students with disabilities and/or chronic and mental illness are able to communicate their own needs and interests and provide input on diversity related measures	2.5.1 Survey the needs, interests, and feedback from students [SPB3/VA] 2.5.2 Participatory formats at events [VA]
<i>Human Resources</i>	2.6 Employees are aware of the needs of persons with disabilities and chronic and mental illnesses	2.6.1 Offer training [VA]
<i>Digitization (IT)</i>	2.7 Digital accessibility in all areas of the university	2.7.1 Mapping of implementation status and adaptation needs with regard to digital accessibility [PK]

- 2.7.2 Reporting in line with Berlin's Barrier-Free Information and Communication Technology Act [PK]
- 2.7.3 Development and implementation of a plan to achieve digital accessibility [PK]

Racism und Migrant Backgrounds

Goal: Lay the groundwork to address structural racism at the university

<i>Area of Activity</i>	Aims	Measures [Lead]
<i>Study & Teaching</i>	3.1 Empowerment for students affected by racism	3.1.1 Conduct empowerment workshops for students of color [SPB3]
<i>Internal Communication & Participation</i>	3.2 The university engages in a critical conversation about its own structural racism	3.2.1 Events for university employees [MvBZ] 3.2.2 Targeted publication of writing by university members on racism (in various media/formats) [PK] 3.2.3 Conduct a social media campaign for the International Day Against Racism
<i>Human Resources</i>	3.3 Increase the representation of employees with migrant backgrounds	3.3.1 Research on barriers to entry in the recruitment of employees with migrant backgrounds
	3.4 Employees are aware of racism	3.4.1 Promote participation in training on (anti-)racism

Social Status

Goal: Reduce institutional and linguistic barriers for prospective students and students with heterogeneous school and educational biographies in their transition to university studies

<i>Area of Activity</i>	Aims	Measures [Lead]
<i>Strategy & Structure</i>	4.1 Needs and scope of action of the university with regard to social status are known and taken into account	4.1.1 Targeted needs assessment on social status at the university, including barriers to access [SPB3]
<i>Internal Communication & Participation</i>	4.2 The university engages in a critical conversation about structural inequality in relation to social status from an intersectional perspective	4.2.1 Targeted publication of writings by university members on social status (in various media/formats) [PK]
	4.3 Prospective students and students with heterogeneous school and training biographies have low-threshold access to information about university studies	4.2.3 Information materials in various formats and publication of existing low-threshold resources at the decentralized level [Academic Advising]

Gender Identity

Goal: Strengthen gender self-determination for trans, intersex, and non-binary (TIN)

university members

<i>Area of Activity</i>	Goals	Measures [Lead]
<i>Study & Teaching</i>	5.1 Empowerment of TIN students	5.1.1 Conduct empowerment workshops for TIN students [SPB3]
<i>Internal Communication & Participation</i>	5.2 The university's language and forms of address are inclusive in relation to gender diversity	5.2.1 Map practices and needs for change in relation to language and forms of address [VP2/SPB3] 5.2.2 Develop adapted procedures/templates and resources [VP2/SPB3]
<i>Human Resources</i>	5.3 Employees are aware of gender diversity and the needs of TIN individuals	5.3.1 Offer training [VA]
<i>Digitization (IT)</i>	5.4 University members can change their name and gender marker in the university's digital data systems without difficulty	5.4.1 Map practices and needs for change with regard to procedures for changing names and gender markers in digital data systems [VP2/SPB3] 5.4.2 Adapt procedures and develop resources [VP2/SPB3]

These objectives and measures represent Freie Universität Berlin's priorities for the period 2021 to 2023. They ensure the strategic management of the university's diversity work and the establishment of robust foundations for its successful further development. Furthermore, many existing measures will be continued. There is also a wide variety of other ideas at Freie Universität. In terms of a needs based approach that allows room for bottom-up initiatives, the objectives and measures set out in this plan are meant to serve as a scaffold that can be built upon, rather than a wall that restricts activities.

7. Implementation

Responsibility for each measure is assigned to a lead organization. Development and implementation are carried out primarily by, and in cooperation with, working groups (in accordance with the diversity governance structure). We will focus as much attention as possible on the participation of relevant stakeholders, including target groups, across all status groups, as members of the working group and/or as consulting experts. The working groups are required to report to the Diversity Council, which in turn reports to the Diversity Steering Committee. The attainment of objectives will ultimately be reported to the university's Executive Board, which will then share its findings with the Academic Senate, so that the university can achieve a high level of transparency and awareness.

The implementation of the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan 2021–2023 is mainly carried out within the framework of the Stifterverband's Diversity Audit, as an overarching organizational development project, which is carried out with the support of an external auditor and managed by the Vice President for Diversity and Gender Equity in cooperation with the Diversity Steering Committee.

Initially, in 2021, members of the Diversity Council will clarify the measures in workshops, and working groups will be established to support the lead organizations with implementation. This is intended to enable the participation of all status groups on equal footing, in particular, affected groups of people. For example, in order to revise the procedures for changing the name and gender entry in the university's digital data systems (Measures 5.4.1, 5.4.2), a working group was already established at the end of 2020, in which the responsible university administration offices for the relevant systems, the Executive Board member responsible for diversity and equality, the Diversity and Gender Controlling Office, the central Gender Equality Officer, and the transgender counseling unit of the General Students' Committee work together.³⁷

The Diversity and Gender Controlling Office supports the overarching implementation of the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan and the diversity governance structure as an expert in the area who serves on the relevant committees and on some working groups, and through management responsibilities and consulting services.

When planning measures, the lead organization or working group formulate measurable goals and deliverables in each case. We anticipate that the lead organization responsible for specific measures will also be in charge of conducting **evaluations that look at if and how objectives have been met**, with the active involvement and participation of the persons involved and/or affected.³⁸

After about a year, those involved hold a workshop to reflect on the work and adjust measures if necessary. In 2023, we will produce a report on the implementation of the measures and the achievement of the objectives (certification by the Stifterverband will take place on this basis), and draw conclusions about the continuation of the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan.

The implementation of the Diversity Strategy and Action Plan requires human and financial resources. The implementation of measures should fall within the regular work responsibilities of the employees involved. After all, diversity is categorized as a cross-sectional task. This possibly limiting factor and the

³⁷ Due to the urgent need for action, a pilot process to change display names in online instructional systems for trans, intersex and non-binary students was introduced in 2020.

³⁸ Evaluation methods appropriate to the measure will be determined by the lead department and/or working group in consultation with the Diversity Council, as appropriate. These range from low-threshold group discussions to the use of empirical research methods to quantitatively measure effectiveness.

need for resources for implementation (as well as potential sources of financial support) are taken into account when designing measures.

8. Outlook: Challenges

Our assessment in 2020 confirmed that Freie Universität Berlin has a variety of measures in place that contribute to achieving its diversity goals. It addresses a variety of interlocking, university related and society-wide challenges in promoting diversity and reducing discrimination in a sustainable manner.

The effectiveness of the many and varied stakeholders and diversity activities at Freie Universität is weakened by the lack of overarching control, structure, bundling, evaluation, and monitoring. For this reason, the “strategy and structure” field of action will be a particular focus over the next two years. The Diversity Strategy and Action Plan is an important tool as of now. Nevertheless, **strategic prioritization** of goals and measures and careful **budgeting** of human resources and financial resources³⁹ at the university continue to pose a significant challenge in implementing the diversity strategy. This is especially true for simultaneous processes (for example, system reaccreditation, renegotiation of university contracts, and structural planning), for **changing framework conditions** (for example, the amendment of the Berlin Higher Education Act), for **conflicts of interest** or different needs, and in some cases for new working structures for dedicated university members and the **interlocking of centralized and decentralized approaches** (top-down and bottom-up). Expectations are managed through transparency and proactive communication, and implementation is controlled through participative, flexible and at the same time binding work structures and assignments with simultaneous overarching project management.

Although Freie Universität Berlin has long been concerned with diversity as an aspect of its profile and development, it is still a relatively new strategic issue for higher education institutions. In this context, these operate within interlocking areas of tension, for example, with regard to the relationship between the horizontal diversity approach and the vertical approach to gender equity, in which a variety of structures and instruments are now established within the framework of the equality mandate, both within universities and in legal systems and funding programs. Freie Universität Berlin is embarking upon a constructive path with gender equity as an independent element within the university’s overall diversity strategy. Nevertheless, we must continue to ensure that competition does not develop **between the promotion of gender equity and support for other structurally disadvantaged groups**. To date, Freie Universität’s focus has been on gender equality, so the majority of measures that pursue diversity-related goals relate only or primarily to gender. In comparison, Freie Universität has less experience and fewer structures, instruments, and stakeholders when it comes to other dimensions of diversity, such as ethnic origin and/or racist and anti-Semitic attribution. The development and implementation of measures that take into account further diversity dimensions should neither be sidelined nor lead to the dismantling of measures for gender equity; instead, they should lead to mutual enrichment and, for example, in order to strengthen an intersectional approach within all measures.

The appropriate **participation and representation of structurally disadvantaged groups** in diversity work is also a challenge. Measures such as the appointment of interest groups to represent specific social groups has both conceptual and practical limitations. An expansion of the group would complicate administrative procedures and create a disproportionate burden on members of these groups, as the pool is often small, partly as a result of the structural discrimination that needs to be

³⁹ The introduction of unconscious bias training for all appointment committee members, for example, means a considerable investment of time and financial resources in view of the fact that the university conducts around 40 appointment procedures per year.

reduced. This can be to their disadvantage, for example, with regard to their academic career.⁴⁰ Moreover, there are problems regarding the selection of social groups/diversity dimensions and the impossibility of a comprehensive representation in view of intersectionality. Nevertheless, the participation of structurally disadvantaged groups is essential. Especially in light of experiences abroad,⁴¹ it seems to be constructive to take approaches in which a diverse team with expertise in specific areas works in an action-oriented rather than identity-oriented manner, addressing, for example, racism as a practice of exclusion or potential-oriented selection procedures as a practice of inclusion. This team then acts as the hub of a broad-based, participatory structure. Universities are not the only institutions facing the challenge of **implementing a horizontal, intersectional approach** in an internal and external context that has so far been strongly characterized by an additive understanding of social categories and the promotion of individuals. We have to keep this challenge in mind when developing a model for work structures.

It is important to also keep in mind that interest groups and committees are not as effective as appropriately equipped posts and cannot be used to cover the work that such posts ought to perform. Instead, they should work in cooperation with them. This is because the **integration of measures into sustainable structures** and **transparent accountability** play a key role in achieving objectives. This requires embedding **financial support for core structural measures** in the basic budget and using **opportunities to apply for project funding**.

The **participation of students** as a status group is also a challenge. In the diversity governance structure of Freie Universität Berlin, student representatives are members of the Diversity Council, but there are structural barriers to participation, for example, lack of non-intrinsic incentives, limited time and energy and a lack of planning certainty in view of studies and employment (especially during the Corona pandemic), as well as a high turnover rate due to graduation and examination phases. Freie Universität Berlin will explore these questions as part of the participatory evaluation of the governance structure.

Freie Universität Berlin has long formulated goals and systematically collected data with regard to the diversity dimension 'gender', but it is still in the early stages of building a **robust data basis** with regard to other dimensions. The development and implementation of **data collection procedures**, systems, and documentation that allow for the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative diversity data in line with data protection regulations, and that can also be analyzed intersectionally, involves considerable effort that has not yet been taken into account in the allocation of resources for universities. Moreover, there is as yet no established substantive and methodological best practice regarding **quality and success criteria** as well as **indicators** for socially constructed groups and phenomena such as discrimination, for example, in the collection of data on persons who have (potentially) experienced racism or who have a history of immigration in their family (see also LADG). Through inter-university cooperation and especially through the leadership of the Data Collection Working Group of the Diversity Council of the 1Europe project, Freie Universität Berlin will both benefit from international experience and contribute to the further development of this field.

Freie Universität Berlin is confident that, with the help of a combination of short-, medium-, and long term strategic goals, we will be able to make further progress in the coming years on the basis of this

⁴⁰ Because, for example, less research time is available due to a high burden of committee work. This has been the experience of Freie Universität Berlin with regard to women's participation in committees in areas where women are underrepresented.

⁴¹ See, for example, the results of the research project of the [Gender & Diversity Division](#) at the [Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science](#) (2018–2019).

Diversity Strategy and Action Plan, particularly in terms of needs-based management, and ultimately succeed in doing effective work on diversity.

Abbreviations/Glossary

- AGG: [Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz 2006 \(General Act on Equal Treatment 2006\)](#). Protects against discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, religion/belief, age, disability, and sexual identity in employment and civil relationships.
- AS: [Academic Senate](#) of the Freie Universität Berlin. One of the central bodies of the university's self government. It consists of 25 members: thirteen professors and four students as well as academic and non-academic employees. It participates in all major decisions of the university and takes a position on all major issues.
- AStA: [Allgemeiner Studierendenausschuss](#) (General Students' Committee). University-wide advocacy and administrative body for all students at the university. Organized and designed by students themselves. Structured into units and advisory services. Representatives are elected annually by the student parliament.
- BerIHG: [Berliner Hochschulgesetz](#) (Berlin Higher Education Act). Governs the rights and responsibilities of institutions of higher education at the state level. Includes, among other things, regulations on equal opportunities for the sexes, the role of Gender Equality Officers, and the compatibility of family, career, and studies. The superordinate federal law is the [Higher Education Framework Act](#).
- BBS: [Stabsstelle Berufungsverfahren und Berufungsstrategie](#) (Office of Faculty Recruitment and Appointment Strategy at Freie Universität Berlin).
- BIKTG: [Barrierefreie Informations- und Kommunikationsgesetz Berlin 2019 \(Berlin's Barrier-Free Information and Communication Act 2019\)](#). Regulates the requirements for barrier-free digital communication in administration.
- BUA: [Berlin University Alliance](#). Network comprised of Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, and Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin. The German federal and state governments, in the context of the Excellence Strategy research competition, provided funding in 2019 for an initial period of seven years. Long-term goal: an integrated research landscape in Berlin.
- F: [Zentrale Frauenbeauftragte](#) (Central Gender Equality Officer) at Freie Universität Berlin. The duties, rights, and selection of the Gender Equality Officer are governed by Section 59 [BerIHG](#). She is also a women's representative as defined by the [LGG](#).
- HRK: [Hochschulrektorenkonferenz](#). (German Rectors' Conference). Association of state and state-recognized universities in Germany.
- LADG: [Landesantidiskriminierungsgesetz Berlin 2020](#). (Berlin State Anti-Discrimination Act 2020). Expands current federal anti-discrimination law. Refers to official actions of the State of Berlin, by which it binds Freie Universität, among others, as a corporation under public law that is indirectly owned by the state.
- LGBG: [Landesgleichberechtigungsgesetz 2006](#). (State Equal Rights Act 2006). Meant to ensure the establishment of equal living conditions for people with and without disabilities in Berlin.
- LGG: [Landesgleichstellungsgesetz 1991](#). (State Equal Opportunities Act 1991). Commits institutions of the State of Berlin to gender equality and the active advancement of women.
- MvBZ: [Margherita-von-Brentano-Zentrum](#). (Margherita von Brentano Center). An institution for gender studies, with an interdisciplinary and international focus (Freie Universität Berlin).
- PE: [Referat Personalentwicklung](#), (Office of Personnel Development). Part of Division I: Personnel of the central university administration at Freie Universität Berlin.
- PK: [Stabsstelle Presse und Kommunikation](#), (Office of Press and Communications at Freie Universität Berlin).
- SGB IX: [Neuntes Sozialgesetzbuch](#). (German Social Code Volume IX). Section 2.1 defines people as having a disability if their physical function, mental ability, or mental health is very likely to deviate from the condition typical of their age for more than six months and their participation in society is therefore impaired.
- SPB3: Diversity and Gender Controlling. Part of the Office for Strategic Planning and Reporting at Freie Universität Berlin.
- TIN*: Transgender, Intersex and Non-binary. Gender identities beyond a binary model of male and female. See, for example, the [Working Group for Trans*emancipatory University Policy](#).
- Toolbox: [Toolbox Gender und Diversity in der Lehre](#). (Toolbox for Gender and Diversity in Teaching). A project of the Office of the [Central Gender Equality Officer](#) and the [Margherita von Brentano Center](#) of Freie Universität Berlin.
- VA: [Zentrale Services](#). (Central Services). Part of the Personnel Department in the central university administration. Matters related to teaching and study, including the [Beratungsstelle für Studierende mit Behinderungen und mit chronische Erkrankungen](#) (Office for Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses) at Freie Universität Berlin.

- VP2: Vice President Responsible for Diversity and Gender Equity (among other remits) at Freie Universität Berlin: Prof. Dr. Verena Blechinger-Talcott.
- VP3: Vice President Responsible for Teaching and Studies (among other remits) at Freie Universität Berlin: Prof. Dr. Hauke Heekeren.
- VZÄ: [Vollzeitäquivalent](#). (Full-Time Equivalent position, or FTE). Equivalent to the usual working hours of a person employed full-time. A unit of measurement for staffing levels.

Appendix: Members of the Diversity Steering Committee and the Diversity Council

Members of the Diversity Steering Committee

Two year term

By office: (11 members) (Appointed by the Executive Board on May 28, 2020)

- The Executive Board member responsible for diversity: Prof. Dr. Verena Blechinger-Talcott (Chair)
- Diversity & Gender Controlling: Gabriele Rosenstreich (Director)
- Representative for Division I Personnel: Regina Adolphs
- Representative for Division V Academic Affairs: Beate Hammers
- Representative for the Office of Strategic Planning and Reporting: Nicole Eschner
- Central Gender Equality Officer: Dr. Mechthild Koreuber
- Chief Representative for Individuals with Severe Disabilities: André Lefeber
- AGG Complaints Center for Employees: Vacant
- Head of the Gender and Diversity working group: Prof. Dr. Gülay Çağlar
- Expert für Diversity at Freie Universität Berlin: Prof. Dr. Martin Lücke
- Expert für Diversity at Freie Universität Berlin: Prof. Dr. Doris Kolesch

Members of the Diversity Council

Two year term

By office: (17 members) (Appointed by the Executive Board on November 17, 2020)

- Diversity & Gender Controlling: Gabriele Rosenstreich (Director and Chair)
- Chief Representative for Individuals with Severe Disabilities: André Lefeber
- Advisor for Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses: Anja Ahrens
- Commissioner for Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses: Prof. Dr. Olaf Muthorst
- AGG Complaint Center for Employees: Daniela Beitz
- Representative of the Margherita von Brentano Center: Dr. Heike Pantelmann
- Representative of the Gender Equality Officer: Nina Lawrenz
- Speaker of the Gender Equality Officers' Council: Ellinor Trenczek
- Representative of the Center for Academic Advice & Psychological Counseling: Brigitte Reysen-Kostudis
- Representative of the Gender & Diversity OSI: Fallon Tiffany Cabral (representing Friederike Beier)
- Representative of the General Staff Council: Board of Directors
- Representative of the Press & Communications Office: Kerrin Zielke
- Representative of the Dual Career & Family Service: Daniel Hippich
- Representative for Division I Personnel: Lilith Wanner-Mack
- Representative for Division IV International Affairs: Sophie Bahrs
- Representative for Division V Academic Affairs: Katrin Fischer
- Representative of Decentralized Administrative Units: Gisela Rossa-Dubray

Representatives of the status groups: (Eight members) (Appointed by the Academic Senate)

- Students: Maris Trettin, Melanie Geuter (appointed on July 8, 2020);
Substitutes: Paula Ranft (appointed on July 8, 2020), Luca Wagner (appointed on December 9, 2020)
- Academic Staff: Dr. Martha Zapata Galindo, Katharina Schmidt (appointed on July 8, 2020)
Substitutes: Astrid Petzold (appointed on January 20, 2020), Vacant

- Non-academic staff: Alette Winter, Madeleine-Marie Gilles (appointed on October 28, 2020)
Substitutes: Stefanie Bahe, Sera Renée Zentiks (appointed on October 28, 2020)
- Professors: Prof. Dr. Schirin Amir-Moazami, Prof. Dr. Robin Celikates (appointed on July 8, 2020)
Substitutes: Prof. Dr. Britta Schütt, Prof. Dr. Sascha Hein (appointed on July 8, 2020)

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Kaiserswerther Straße 16–18

14195 Berlin

www.fu-berlin.de/diversity

Contact: diversity@fu-berlin.de