

# **The Effects of Gender Equality Management in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) - The Implementation of Gender & Diversity Controlling at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Today, Goethe University (GU) is the third largest university in Germany, with more than 45,000 registered students. Being a strong research university, on average almost one third of its annual budget is externally funded. Its sixteen faculties traditionally enjoy a high degree of autonomy. With regard to gender equality this autonomy has contributed to a highly heterogeneous situation: whereas some faculties have been strongly committed to promoting gender equality, others have shown a tendency to overlook the issue. In order to prompt changes and gradually establish high equality-oriented standards throughout the *whole* university, Gender & Diversity Controlling was setup in 2010.

In my presentation I'd like to highlight two building blocks of Gender Management or Gender & Diversity Controlling at Goethe University and discuss some of the effects, challenges and successes encountered and achieved so far. Beforehand, I'd like to outline very briefly some of the framework conditions in the German higher education system that influenced this development.

One major external stimulus (among others) has been the "Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality" developed by the DFG<sup>1</sup>, Germany's largest research funding organization, in 2008. All DFG's member universities – Goethe University being one of them – have committed themselves to the implementation of these standards. Moreover, the DFG stresses that all major research proposals are supposed to expound their institution's efforts and strategies to ensure gender equality.

## **2 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLANS (ABBREVIATED GEDAP) FOR FACULTIES**

GEDAP is a biannual planning and reporting-cycle that seeks to enhance and promote gender equality within faculties by deploying methods of controlling and quality management. While drawing on Sanders (2005) notion of equality controlling as a top-down strategy, we decided

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<sup>1</sup> Deutsche Forschungsgesellschaft = German Research Foundation

that the processes and procedures should also include bottom up elements and enable bottom up initiatives to evolve. In doing so we wanted to assure broader participation and self-commitment, as well as take into account and cater to the faculties' autonomy.

Planning and reporting tools (gender statistics, formsheets and guidelines) were developed to help the faculties analyze the state of gender equality in their field every other year. They are required to report on and assess the actions taken over the past two years. Based on this self-assessment, they set targets and plan actions for coming years. Advice and support is offered by the gender & diversity controlling coordinator together with the university's gender consulting officers during all phases of assessment and action planning, especially with regard to the implementation of appropriate measures and activities. Additionally, a »tool box« for gender and diversity-related measures is at hand. Finally, however, it rests with the faculty to decide on specific strategies and actions.

After being formally adopted by the faculty's board and/or decision-making committee each faculty's GEDAP is reviewed and evaluated in terms of meeting quality requirements. The findings are then discussed with the Senate's committee for the promotion of women, equality and diversity and, in a final step within every planning cycle, recommendations for action are communicated to the faculty.

Due to the drastic financial cutbacks the university (and the faculties) had to deal with when GEDAP were first implemented in 2010, there was no option to integrate substantial financial incentives and/or sanctions. Therefore, GEDAP was set up as a dialogical process. As of 2014, two planning and reporting cycles have been completed. There has been some criticism and reluctance to GEDAP on the faculties' part, being one more administrative task added to their list, but in general we see slow but steady progress. The notion of a planning and controlling cycle is now familiar, as is the duty for faculties to report on their activities or lack thereof. Additional effects are greater awareness and knowledge of equality and diversity issues within the faculties' boards, more transparency and exchange between faculties and, not least, empowerment and acknowledgement for bottom up initiatives in the faculties.

This year GU is setting up its first comprehensive GEDAP 2015-2019 for the university as a whole. It will bring together strategies on the promotion of gender equality with its diversity policies regarding "Gender [as] a core dimension of diversity" (Goethe University, 2011, p.3).

The planning process is accompanied by awareness-raising workshops for different groups in order to ensure broad participation by students, as well as teaching, researching and administrative staff and to integrate bottom up initiatives. Another intended effect is to strengthen the university members' commitment to equality and diversity by raising awareness and increasing knowledge about structural and cultural barriers for women in academia, as well as for students from low educational or non-German backgrounds.

### **3 THE ROLE OF GENDER MONITORING AND REPORTING**

The role of Gender Monitoring and Reporting within Gender Management is the second aspect I'd like to highlight in this presentation. When Gender and Diversity Controlling started in 2010, the first thing we wanted to establish was a basic Gender Monitoring that

went beyond simply piling up statistics and figures. We agreed on a small set of data and key indicators to describe the situation, as well as a distinctive design to present them visually and in written form (e.g. the annually published “Equality-Monitor”). Our aim was to create a common knowledge base with regard to equality issues throughout the university by means of providing information that catches the addressees’ attention and is easily accessible and recognizable.

In addition, Gender Monitoring and Reporting at GU strongly draws upon the aspect of competition among universities by publishing and communicating GU’s performance in equality rankings, ratings and audits (e.g. the DFG’s rating of its’ members implementation of Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality, and biannual CEWS-Ranking). We also use available data to assess Goethe-University’s performance in comparison to other research-oriented universities throughout Germany (e.g. German U15).

This has proven to be highly effective within our university and has helped to create an awareness of equality indicators as indicators of high performance among other markers for the university’s achievement and attractiveness (e.g. the percentage of newly appointed women, or the percentage of women professors). This in turn supports the conception and acceptance of gender equality as a management issue.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

Goethe University seeks to establish high equality-oriented standards throughout the university by applying methods of quality management and controlling to the field of gender equality. The implementation of a regular planning and reporting cycle for faculties is set up as a dialogical process combining top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Drawing upon the increasing competitiveness in the higher education system, Gender Monitoring and Reporting at GU continuously publishes the university’s performance in national gender equality rankings and award schemes. As a result gender equality is more and more perceived as an indicator for high performance.

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## **Biographical information**

Annemarie Mlakar is deputy head of the equal opportunities' office at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main. After working as a controller in the financial sector for 12 years, she studied sociology and gender studies at the universities of Vienna, Austria and Constance, Germany. After her graduation in 2009, she began work in the field of equality and diversity. Since 2010 Mlakar is in charge of setting up Gender & Diversity Controlling as well as the integration of equality issues into quality management at Goethe University Frankfurt. Mlakar supports the nationwide exchange of expertise through her activities in the network „Gleichstellungs-Controlling“, which has been initiated by Goethe University.