Equal Opportunities at RWTH Aachen University

Action Plan 2017 – 2022
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Preface

As the RWTH Aachen University Rector’s Office, it is our constitutional obligation to enforce equality among women and men and to ensure protection against discrimination at the University. Both are fundamental prerequisites for creating equal opportunities and securing the success of the University. Only by utilizing the talents of all university members and attracting outstanding students, scientists, and employees in technology and administration, RWTH is able to maintain its position as an internationally recognized university through its strength in research and teaching.

In the past ten years, the topic of Gender & Diversity has been systematically implemented as a crosscutting issue in numerous strategic processes and institutions at RWTH. Target quotas based on projections have been defined in strategy papers, plans for the promotion of women, and objective and performance agreements with the faculties. While there has been indisputable progress, the current university ranking based on equal treatment aspects from the Center of Excellence Women and Science and the analysis of the plan for the promotion of women show that this progress is still lagging behind expectations and that even setbacks have occurred. It is also impossible to miss resistance at our own university – which is the focus of research in the social sciences, including keywords such as “gender bias in performance evaluation” and “homo-social cooptation.” Despite excellent cooperation at the central level, it is evident that further active work is necessary to consistently meet this resistance.

The Rector’s Office Staff Unit: Integration Team – Human Resources, Gender and Diversity Management (iGaD) and the Equal Opportunities Office have initiated a new equal opportunities concept with the aim of making equal opportunities work at RWTH more sustainable and effective within the framework of an overall strategy. This concept was discussed in the University committees and approved by the Senate, thus replacing the previous concept from 2008.

The concept expresses a reinforced focus on equal opportunities in all areas of the University, protection against discrimination, and the facilitation of careers independent of personal characteristics and life situations. The six fields of action in the Equal Opportunities Concept - Cultural Change, Gender Governance, Gender Monitoring, University as a Place of Work, Equal Treatment and Protection against Discrimination, and Research and Teaching directly address these concerns.

The Equal Opportunities Concept is an important component of our University Strategy. It includes the multitude of perspectives, pragmatically addresses the blind spots in our Gender & Diversity Strategy, and contains an equally ambitious yet realistic work program until 2022. Our objectives, however, are only achievable with support from the entire University. Thus, we ask that you help support the activities formulated here. Actively work together with us to make RWTH a place where equal opportunities is a lived truth.
Yours

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Univ.-Prof. Dr.-Ing. Ernst M. Schmachtenberg
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Yours

D. Klee
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1. Introduction

Excellence Needs Equal Opportunity

Equal opportunities is a topic of such an importance that it is an independent policy field at the federal and state levels. Both legally grounded in and legitimized by the Higher Education Act (HG, revision 2014) and the State Equal Opportunities Act (LGG, revision 2017), equal opportunities is a relevant component of university development.

In order to heed this call, equal opportunities at RWTH Aachen University is an expressed responsibility of management and is securely anchored in the University structure as a strategic crosscutting topic. The first delegate for women was elected in 1991, with the position renamed as the equal opportunities officer in 1999, as the LGG took effect. The topic took on even more importance with the institution of the Excellence Initiative. Over the course of the initiative the Rector’s Staff Unit: Integration Team – Human Resources, Gender and Diversity Management (IGaD) was founded at RWTH in 2007; the publication of the first equal opportunities concept followed in 2008. In the following years, numerous equal opportunity measures were implemented and three professorships related to gender were successively established. RWTH’s top position in the last university ranking based on equal opportunity aspects by the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences\(^1\) is proof of the University’s clear successes and the positive development in the area of equal opportunities.

The national evaluation of the Excellence Initiative (2016) shows, however, that the effects of equal opportunity measures – despite verifiable advances – are lagging behind expectations. The Federal Conference of Women’s Representatives and Equal Opportunities Officers at Universities thus calls for the consistent promotion of equal opportunity measures in the Excellence Initiative III and for them to be fixed components of selection processes and implementation structures.\(^2\) The equal opportunity professionals at the Excellence Universities also emphatically point out the continuous strategic importance of institutionalized equal opportunity structures. Since 2012, the European Commission has required, as part of its research funding policy, that research organizations implement equal opportunity structures that determine gender-specific inequalities, implement strategies for rectifying these inequalities, and achieve planned objectives using indicators.\(^3\)

RWTH’s Equal Opportunities Concept\(^4\), initiated and developed by IGaD and the Equal Opportunities Office, consistently responds to these clear signals: The aim is to strategically institute the equal opportunities work at the University even more effectively, set necessary priorities, and evaluate the measures to be implemented and their effects.

Particular focus is placed on a strengthened orientation towards equal opportunities in all areas of the University, protection against discrimination, and the

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Duration: 2017 – 2022
facilitation of careers independent of personal characteristics and life situations. The six fields of action in the Equal Opportunities Concept, Cultural Change, Gender Governance, Gender Monitoring, University as a Place of Work, Equal Treatment, and Research and Teaching directly address these concerns (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1: The fields of action of the Equal Opportunities Concept at RWTH Aachen University. Source: Own figure](image)

Each field of action is composed of a target, an illustration of the current situation at RWTH, the resulting need for action, and future activities and the associated quality assurance.

The fields of action were presented, discussed, and determined during a workshop at the beginning of 2016, to which all those involved with equal opportunities in science and administration, all group representatives, and staff councils at RWTH were invited. The participatory process underlines the importance of equal opportunities as a topic for all university members – the objective is not simply “equal opportunities for all” but also “equal opportunities with all.” The concept at hand forms a strategic foundation to equally reach all students, employees, and managers at RWTH and motivate them to contribute to the university’s equal opportunities objectives.
2. Cultural Change

Objective
Strengthening a Culture of Appreciation

The acceptance and appreciation of people with different backgrounds and the active promotion of their participation are elementary conditions for the cultural change within a university oriented towards equal opportunities and treatment. All members of RWTH are thus to be encouraged to reflect on their thought and behavioral patterns in order to contribute to cultural change in all areas of the University through appreciative, collegial, and cooperative behavior.

Current State and Need for Action
An essential feature of RWTH’s viability is the active promotion of cultural change. Numerous sensitization measures are to help employees, managers, and students with consciously dealing with one another in an open and appreciative manner. However, the hierarchical relationships within the University also clearly create dependencies, which could stand in the way of a culture oriented towards equal treatment. Managers are particularly responsible for working creatively and consistently towards improving this culture.
Future Activities

- The gender aspects must be adhered to in all future concept and strategy papers of the University and administrative actions.
- A stronger binding obligation to equal opportunities must be created particularly when implementing the "Guideline for Protection against Discrimination According to the General Equal Opportunities Act (AGG) of RWTH."
- Existing communication and information channels will be reinforced, in order, for example, to raise even more awareness of the possibilities of filing a complaint or seeking advising at RWTH.
- Innovative models and instruments for management and feedback will be reviewed for their applicability in the University. This may occur, e.g. in a pilot project at an institute and/or in a division.
- Trainings and workshops intended to help strengthen gender and diversity skills will be expanded. Offers take place
  - within the framework of Internationalisation@home
  - to strengthen employees’ intercultural skills
  - as anti-bias trainings5 to sensitize and develop the skills of human resource representatives, e.g. with regards to personnel selection.
- Continuation of the IGaD event series “A Changing University – Perspectives on Gender and Diversity”

Quality Assurance

An interim report and a final report on the Equal Opportunities Strategy will be completed by using qualitative analyses that take place in workshops.

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5 This is a recognized training method for processing prejudices and sensitizing individuals for stereotypes with the objective of developing skills for action strategies that consciously consider diversity and critically regard discrimination.
3. Gender Governance

Current State and Need for Action

RWTH has given its Gender Governance a control structure with the so-called "Aachen Gender Triangle." Its mode of action must be reflected critically and reviewed consistently to ensure and maintain quality. This opens up new courses of action for equal opportunity actors, leads to an increase in cooperation within the "Aachen Gender Triangle," and can be used simultaneously to restructure central and peripheral collaboration. Professors, whose research focuses on gender, should increasingly work as consulting entities; their relevant accompanying research must be included more intensively.

The implementation of a governance for equal opportunity structures unifies the approaches of a top-down and bottom-up strategy: Equal opportunity objectives are integrated into the control and planning processes at all levels. The responsibility of realizing those aims is with the University administration and managers. Employees and students are to have an equal claim to these aims.

Objective
Reinforcement of Equal Opportunity-Relevant Structures, Processes, and Responsibilities

Gender Governance at RWTH encompasses the framework conditions for decisions and processes, control mechanisms, and courses of action for equal opportunity actors. Mandatory involvement of all university members is essential for an equal opportunity-oriented organization. This means that university administrators and managers are required to contribute actively to these efforts.

6 The Gender Triangle was developed within the framework of RWTH’s first Equal Opportunities Concept (2008). It encompasses not only the Vice-Rectors Office responsible for equal opportunities but also IGaD, professor-ships with gender denomination, and the Equal Opportunities Officer.
Future Activities

- An Equal Opportunities Codex is being developed for RWTH.
- Joint equal opportunities standards are being drafted and implemented in transregional collaborations with universities and research institutions.
- A detailed organizational chart of central and peripheral equal opportunities at RWTH will be created encompassing all relevant actors and necessary processes. This creates transparency with respect to Gender Governance and simultaneously strengthens its structures and processes.
- An appropriate, gender-sensitive financing model pursuant to section 24 (5) HG NRW is being established.
- We will review in which funding programs RWTH can set quotas for promoting women (based on the 30% rule within the framework of the Excellence Cluster of the Institutional Strategy II).
- The Equal Opportunities Plans (formerly the plans for the promotion of women) will be strategically used and contribute to the equal opportunities oriented development among the faculties, Central University Administration, and other university institutions.
- The peripheral equal opportunity actors will be supported with the development and implementation of a model that relieves the representatives of the equal opportunities officer within the faculties.
- The implementation of dialog formats should make it possible to continue the discussion outside of the Central University Administration (ZHV) and organizational structure.

Quality Assurance

The activities will be regularly presented in the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Senate, to the Rector’s Office, and in the forumDIVERSITY, to discuss their implementation. The Equal Opportunities Office annually releases a statement of accounts. Quality standards for equal opportunities will also be determined.

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7 See §24 (5) HG NRW
8 IGaD founded forumDIVERSITY in 2014 in order to regularly report on University-wide diversity management activities and develop them together.
4. Gender Monitoring

Current State and Need for Action
Equal opportunities data is currently being gathered from numerous sources at RWTH Aachen and can be found in various publications and agreements. The data make it possible to observe the representation and its development of female:male ratios in different status groups and areas of the University (e.g. the development of the percentage of women in STEM subjects). This will make progress, but also stagnation or even setbacks, visible. It also makes it possible to determine whether measures need to be embraced or whether existing measures are effective. The process sequence, in which the equal opportunities data is collected, must be optimized with consideration for the equal opportunities aims and the systematic inclusion of equal opportunity actors. The data are to be clearly edited, regularly (e.g. annually) updated and given to the faculties. Gender Monitoring is also an instrument to sensitize individuals for equal opportunities topics, which the faculties can implement to document the needs and successes of their equal opportunities work and from which suitable equal opportunities measures can be derived. It may be necessary to flexibly tailor Gender Monitoring to each faculty and specific context.

Future Activities
- The strategic objectives of equal treatment must be equally pursued, whereby it is necessary to examine the current target quotas (mission statement, target agreements, DFG reporting, equal opportunities plans, equal opportunities quotas based on the cascade model, female professors program) and orientation according to the cascade model.
- The attainment of the equal opportunities quota according to the cascade model at the professorial level will be regularly evaluated pursuant to section 37a HG NRW.
- The gender-sensitive financing model that is still to be developed pursuant to section 24 (5) HG NRW will be included in Gender Monitoring in the future.
- Equal opportunities statistics will be drawn up annually.
- The target numbers in equal opportunities must be publicized more within the university, both online and in print publications.

Quality Assurance
The data collected through Gender Monitoring serves as a quality assurance instrument. The Equal Opportunities Plans as well as the target and performance agreements will be consistently evaluated.

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9 This occurs within the framework of the university networks TU9 and CESAER and in university rankings based on equal opportunity aspects from the Center of Excellence Women and Science CEWS.

10 For example, in the annual report to the DFG according to the cascade model, in the gender ticker (current statistics on gender distribution) of the statement from the RWTH Equal Opportunities Officer, in equal opportunities plans, in tables of figures, in individual evaluations e.g. within the framework of the FESTA EU project, in target and performance agreements, etc.
5. University as a Place of Work

Current State and Need for Action

Employment Conditions
In the “Guidelines for Good Employment Conditions for Staff”, conditions regarding contract durations at RWTH were defined to improve the predictability of career paths.

Family Friendliness
In 2015, RWTH was re-certified for the second time in the audit for family-friendly universities. The current process is taking place under the heading “consolidation;” in the future organizational objectives are to be anchored in daily work. Members of the university will be supported with information and advising offers and the facilitation of childcare. The service offerings must be expanded to meet the needs of target groups, childcare must be improved, and family-friendly staff management must be implemented.

Appointment Process
After the amendment of the Higher Education Act the appointment regulation and appointment handbook were revised; additionally recommendations were developed to ensure the appropriate involvement of women in selection committees. Fulfilling the equal opportunities quota (pursuant to section 37a.1 HG NRW) is prerequisite to attaining RWTH’s equal opportunities objectives.

Equal Opportunity Staff Development
Strengthening equal opportunities and diversity was already expressed as an objective in the Guidelines for Staff Development. Gender and Diversity are an independent field of action in RWTH’s Staff Development Concept, which also contains measures for the period 2017 - 2022.

Objective
Shaping the University as an Equal Opportunity Work Environment
The responsible treatment of employees is greatly valued at RWTH. As the largest employer and vocational trainer in the Aachen region and one of the most visible universities in Germany, RWTH expressly commits itself to giving people the space to optimally develop their performance regardless of their origin, culture, physical ability, or gender. Through good employment conditions, family-friendly organizational development, transparent selection processes, and equal opportunity staff development, RWTH is becoming an attractive place to work and study for talented students and employees in Germany and abroad. This leads to an improvement in the possibilities for attracting and retaining talented members of the University.
Future Activities

Employment Conditions

- A guideline is being developed that covers topics ranging from how to shape gender-sensitive conversations with employees to reliable, plannable, working conditions and perspectives ("good employment"). This guideline will incorporate and call upon existing instruments (e.g. MAG11).
- Gender aspects will be taken into consideration within the framework of Occupational Health Management (BGM).

Family Friendliness

- "The Golden Rules of Family-Friendly Staff Management" will be expanded to include recommendations on how to practically implement them at RWTH.
- The advising and service offers specifically for international employees/students will be further developed in collaboration with the International Office and the Family Services Center at the Equal Opportunities Office.
- The number of daycare spots for children (particularly up to the age of three) of RWTH employees will be increased.
- The support offers linked to the family card for students (pursuant to §5 (3) ÜPO) will be optimized.

Appointment Process

- Recommendations for gender-sensitive appointment processes will be created and added to the appointment handbook to support chairpersons and members of the appointment committees.
- The handbook for gender-sensitive committee discussions and comparable recommendations will be linguistically revised to include gender-fair/neutral language.
- Experienced professionals will regularly conduct trainings.
- The equal opportunities quota will be implemented as a control instrument based on the cascade model.

Equal Opportunity Staff Development

- Target quotas analogous to the cascade model (section 37a HG NRW) will be introduced for the career step after doctoral studies and implemented into the equal opportunities plans.
- Programs for promoting female junior managers (career development, mentoring) including a reinforced focus on female international scientists will be permanently implemented at RWTH.
- We will review whether photos can be excluded during the application process. After a positive evaluation this change will be introduced to the Job Database 2.0. In the future, job postings will include a standard sentence, such as "In our pursuit for equal treatment, we ask that you refrain from including an application photo."
- Various part-time models are to be made possible based on individual life situations (e.g. almost full-time part-time models, management in part-time positions) (cf. section 13.3 LGG).

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11 Appraisal interview with RWTH Aachen employees
• The module “gender-sensitive staff management” is to be integrated into the central offers for general further training for management. Guidelines for conversations on topics such as maternity leave, parental leave, work re-entry, and caring for relatives will be created for binding use by managers.

Quality Assurance
Employment Conditions
The Guideline for Good Employment Conditions will be reviewed for a potential gender bias, data will be gathered about the percentage of women holding permanent positions, instruments for flexible work places will be evaluated12, and an analysis of the gender pay gap will be conducted (see Gender Monitoring).

Family Friendliness
The target agreements made within the framework of RWTH’s recertification as a family-friendly university will be fulfilled. The sustainability of the identified measures in the target agreements will also be reviewed.

Appointment Process
Within the framework of Gender Monitoring the numeric development of applications, invitations, list rankings, and appointments will be evaluated and linked with the gender-sensitive financing model to be developed according to section 24 (5) HG NRW.

Equal Opportunity Staff Development
The data collected through Gender Monitoring will be used for quality assurance purposes.

12 E.g. proposal statistics, survey of participating employees and the respective supervisors
6. Equal Treatment & Protection Against Discrimination

Objective
Expansion and Assurance of Protection Against Discrimination

By ensuring equal treatment and protection against discrimination, a fundamental pre-requisite is achieved by making RWTH an attractive place to study and work. Equal treatment refers to the equal treatment of genders but also other identities named in section 1 AGG, such as ethnic origin, disability, age, religion/worldview, or sexual identity. Pursuant to the General Equal Opportunities Act (section 13 AGG), employees have the right to submit a complaint to the respective office if they feel discriminated at work for one of these reasons.

Current State and Need for Action
The Guideline for Fair Behavior (2001) was expanded in 2013 to include the “Guidelines for Protection Against Discrimination According to the General Equal Opportunities Act or AGG of RWTH Aachen University.” A complaint office for both employees and students as well as a two-step complaint process (confidential advising and formal complaints) were established. Information about the guidelines and complaint process are available online and are given to new employees when they are hired. Students are informed of these resources during orientation events. Exchanges between the responsible offices on advising topics, current information, and the organization of continuing education offerings will regularly take place at the “Equal Treatment & Nondiscrimination Round Table.” A reporting system has not yet been developed (exception: statement from the Equal Opportunities Office about topics covered in advising). We must improve the protection of individuals affected by discrimination. Formal processes always require the disclosure of the individuals’ names. Due to existing dependencies, e.g., in teaching or in doctoral procedures, this is problematic. Thus, processes must be made possible without naming the involved individuals. The visibility of this rule and those responsible for these cases must be increased. Systematic quality assurance must be implemented. Advisors and those with HR or supervisory responsibilities must be regularly offered further trainings in order to overcome uncertainties, particularly those of superiors when dealing with cases of discrimination.
Future Activities

- Pursuant to AGG Section 13, the complaint office must be anchored in the University’s structure and be visible both within and outside of the University. The complaint process and the responsible office for employees and students must be transparent.
- The low-threshold access to complaint offices will be improved.
- We will review if an alternative to the formal complaint process can be developed for certain cases.
- Reporting serves to identify structural discrimination, systematic avoidance strategies, and allows for the development of suitable preventative measures.
- Internal and external further training opportunities for employees with personnel or supervisory responsibilities and for advisors will be regularly offered to help expand advising skills, among other benefits.

Quality Assurance
Pursuant to the AGG the compliant office will regularly submit a report of its work to the Equal Opportunities Committee. All measures for expanding and ensuring protection against discrimination will be discussed at the “Round Table for Equal Treatment & Non-discrimination” and “forumDIVERSITY.”
Objective
Integration of Gender and Diversity Studies in Research & Teaching

It is university instructors’ responsibility to professionally work with students’ diversity with regards to age, origin, or gender for example and to recognize discrimination, break down prejudices, and enable fair collaboration. To ensure quality in teaching and research, teachers and students are to be supported in learning how to consciously and skillfully handle gender constructions. Research must take both biological and social differences into consideration and integrate these into its processes. For example, gender aspects are important criteria in granting research proposals with regards to research content and designs or the composition of project teams (e.g. DFG proposals).

Current State and Need for Action

In order to increase and ensure the quality of teaching, gender (and diversity) topics must equally be included in courses just as the results of gender research. Gender must be included as a cross-sectional topic in further and continuing education offers in university teaching. Through offers such as the DiVers e-learning tool or ExAcT seminars\(^{13}\) instructors are sensitized and qualified for handling the topic of diversity in university pedagogy. An online tool\(^{14}\) was developed within the framework of the FESTA EU project that systematically gives tips for supervisors and doctoral candidates in order to raise awareness for the topic of gender in doctoral supervision. The supervision agreement format has already been established in some faculties. The comprehensive Gender Consulting (IGaD) services regarding consideration of gender aspects and the implementation of respective measures are commonly not called upon.

\(^{13}\) [www.exact.rwth-aachen.de/startseite/](http://www.exact.rwth-aachen.de/startseite/)
\(^{14}\) [www.festatool.eu](http://www.festatool.eu)
Future Activities

- Pedagogical continuing education offers, e.g. ExAcT, support teachers with creating equal treatment teaching.
- Students will be taught skills in topics related to gender and diversity in lecture series. Participant retention can be increased e.g. by awarding credits.
- The gender and diversity continuing education offers will be expanded for teacher training students.
- We will review how gender offerings can be made more visible in teaching e.g. through integration into the CAMPUS system, the PuL project, or tips in Logbuch Lehre.
- Awarding gender-relevant research promotes the expansion of relevant research projects.
- Gender Consulting (IGaD) will be expanded to include research proposals for structured programs: personal advising on proposal design and content will be integrated as mandatory component of the project phase: Support in the early-proposal phase and with implementing the project, i.e. implementing an equal opportunity module and corresponding measures.

Quality Assurance

Existing evaluation and quality assurance processes at RWTH will be applied in the areas research and teaching, e.g. teaching evaluations. The development and application of a process evaluation are to ensure quality in the areas of gender consulting and the integration of gender aspects in research.
Resources and Further Information

**European Level**


Federal Level


Bundeskonferenz der Frauen- und Gleichstellungsbeauftragten an Hochschulen „Geschlechtergerechtigkeit in der Exzellenzinitiative und in weiteren Bund-Länder-Programmen“, July 2015, online at:


Netzwerk GleichstellungsakteurInnen in der Exzellenzinitiative (GEx) (2015): „Keine Exzellenzinitiative ohne Gleichstellung!“, August 25, 2015, online at:
http://www.gb.uni-koeln.de/e2106/e2113/e17633/20150825_GEx_Positionspapier_GleichstellungInDerExzellenzinitiativelII_ger.pdf

Netzwerk GleichstellungsakteurInnen in der Exzellenzinitiative (GEx) (2010): Exzellente Gleichstellungspraxis – Die Exzellenzinitiative als Motor der Hochschulentwicklung, on-line at:
http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/gsb/aktuelles/exzellente_gleichstellung.pdf

State Level


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