

Resolution by the
38th General Assembly
of the HRK
on 14 May 2024
in Fulda

**Towards greater gender
equality in the appointment
of professors – voluntary
commitment of German
universities**

HRK German Rectors' Conference
The Voice of the Universities

Leipziger Platz 11 Tel.: +49 30 206292-0 post@hrk.de
10117 Berlin Fax: +49 30 206292-215 www.hrk.de

Ahrstraße 39 Tel.: +49 228 887-0 post@hrk.de
53175 Bonn Fax: +49 228 887-110 www.hrk.de

I. Five goals on the road to greater gender equality in the appointment of professors

With reference to the resolution of the 35th General Assembly of the HRK on 15 November 2022, "[On the situation of women on career paths at German universities](#)", the universities reaffirm their sustained commitment to optimising equal opportunity and gender equality in professorial appointments at universities in Germany with this voluntary commitment.

Over the past decade, universities have made significant progress in the areas of equal opportunity, gender equality and inclusion. Many universities have developed comprehensive concepts for the recruitment and advancement of female academics; the proportion of women has risen continuously at all career levels. Determined action is now needed throughout Germany to further reduce structural inequalities and act in an internationally compatible manner. German universities will take the necessary steps to establish gender-equitable appointment procedures, to achieve appropriate gender representation across all subjects and levels in accordance with the cascade model¹, to ensure such representation in the long term and to retain professors on a permanent basis even more frequently.

This voluntary commitment formulates five concrete goals and specifies measures in the individual action areas that contribute to the realisation of institutional cultural and structural change, both at the central level and the level of faculties and departments.

- 1. Active recruitment to expand the candidate pool:** We will make active recruitment the rule in appointment procedures as an element of strategic personnel management and long-term, future-oriented personnel planning and use it specifically to achieve gender equality.
- 2. Gender-equitable appointment procedures:** We will continue to professionalise our appointment procedures and in this way establish gender-equitable appointment procedures on a sustainable basis.
- 3. Establishment of more gender-equitable remuneration structures:** We will actively work to further reduce the existing

¹ According to the cascade model (DFG, 2008), the proportion of women at each academic career level should be at least as high as that of the qualification level directly below. The cascade model thus takes into account the specific circumstances of each subject and enables appropriate targets to be set. Cf. <https://www.dfg.de/de/grundlagen-rahmenbedingungen/grundlagen-und-prinzipien-der-foerderung/chancengleichheit/allg-informationen/gleichstellungsstandards>

gender pay gap in the remuneration of professorships and thus achieve equality in remuneration structures.

4. **Institutional embedding of gender sensitisation and gender competence:** We will establish regular awareness-raising, training and dialogue opportunities for all university target groups and in this way embed gender competence even more firmly in the institutions.
5. **Institutional monitoring:** We will systematically analyse the current situation with regard to gender equality in professorial appointments at both institutional and subject-specific level by using suitable monitoring tools.

The signatory universities undertake to work towards sustainable cultural and structural change at their university through an institutional strategy supported by all university bodies, which will make gender equality in professorial appointments – on the basis of quality-led selection – the norm.

To enable the cultural and structural change described above, the interaction between the various management levels and units within the universities is crucial. In order to achieve the formulated goals, university leaders as well as faculty and department heads must make gender equality their task and be willing to confront a lack of knowledge regarding gender (in)equality and a lack of gender sensitivity and to implement structural and procedural changes, even against established structures and awareness norms. In this process, gender-specific action should not be placed in competition with diversity, but should be considered together with other aspects of diversity. The solutions developed will contribute indirectly to reducing disparity in all dimensions of diversity.

When implementing measures, the universities' room for manoeuvre varies due to different budgetary possibilities and also due to the specific characteristics of different types of higher education institutions and legal requirements in the individual federal states. In those federal states where solutions developed within the university community are not yet applicable due to the legal framework, university leaders will actively seek dialogue with political decision-makers in order to broaden the existing scope of possibilities.

In view of the need to secure skilled labour for research and the innovation capacity and competitiveness of the research system and society as a whole, it is in society's interest to make full use of the available resources at all university locations. In the spirit of this voluntary commitment, the signatory universities intend to work together as a system-wide network for the benefit of all.

II. Toolbox

A portfolio of measures is available to implement the voluntary commitment. In order to successfully establish gender-equitable appointment practices, it will be important to effectively and efficiently dovetail the measures in the five action areas.

1. Active recruitment to expand the candidate pool

To systematically establish active recruitment within the institution – and thus to expand the recruitment pool for filling professorships – it may be expedient

- 1.1 ... to reach a common understanding within the university of the importance of active recruitment to gender equality. This includes not only clarifying the question of what type of measures are to be taken in which specialist areas, but also determining their degree of mandatory application, their structural embedding and the allocation of central and decentralised responsibilities for the implementation of the measures and their monitoring.
- 1.2 ... to make active recruitment instruments the norm in all disciplines as part of high-quality institutional personnel and appointment management. Discipline-specific implementation options for achieving gender equality should be specifically defined and documented, e. g. in appointment guidelines.
- 1.3.1 ... to personally approach potential candidates of under-represented genders and make a more intensive dialogue with these candidates a leadership task through the personal commitment of the responsible actors at all levels. Appropriate forms of approach should be defined for each discipline and individual personal approaches should be documented in a comprehensible manner to ensure the transparency and fairness of appointment procedures.
- 1.4 ... to increasingly promote institutional or discipline-specific internationalisation in personnel policy, with the use of existing networks, in order to expand the recruitment pool to include candidates of all genders.
- 1.5 ... to communicate the use of active recruitment measures more clearly to the outside world and to address and encourage academics of underrepresented genders within and outside the university as early as possible. Communication aimed at specific target groups should be further strengthened to contribute to a realistic assessment of the role of professor and to emphasise the attractiveness of the job. Options for reducing the workload as well as more flexible formats (e. g. tandem or qualification

professorships together with the business community, specialisation professorships) should be placed more at the centre of communication to better address candidates of all genders.

- 1.6 ... ensure support measures for people of underrepresented genders on their academic career path, both for "minor transitions" (first publication, first lecture) and "major transitions" (master's – doctorate, doctorate – postdoc, postdoc – professorship).
- 1.7 ... to familiarise people of underrepresented genders at postdoctoral level, but also doctoral students, with the career path of a professorship at the various types of higher education institutions and its requirements at an early stage and to enable them to gain relevant transfer and practical experience at an equally early stage through the establishment of appropriate structures, mediation and systematic counselling (e. g. doctorates in non-university research or at other research-intensive institutions).
- 1.8 ... as supportive measures for the active recruitment of researchers of underrepresented genders ...
 - 1.8.1 ... to establish or expand tenure track procedures, as these are more attractive for people of underrepresented genders due to the greater predictability and transparency as well as the clearer development prospects with regard to further employment.
 - 1.8.2 ... to make greater use of more flexible formats for advertising vacancies, e. g. open-topic concepts, i. e. positions without dedication or a pre-defined working topic, tandem professorships at universities of applied sciences or cluster appointments with a portfolio of competences. Experience has shown that these more open and broader advertisement formats appeal to a larger number of people and offer greater flexibility in terms of fit, so that the job pool as a whole can be tailored to highly qualified applicants.
 - 1.8.3 ... to expand the university leadership's strategic scope of action by automatically reverting vacant professorships to a centrally managed institutional pool that is available to candidates of all genders.
 - 1.8.4 ... to promote increased interdisciplinary cooperation with non-university research institutions in order to

break up traditional structures and to be able to draw from an expanded recruitment pool. Alliances between several universities in a region can also be a good model for identifying and utilising synergies in a targeted manner.

2. Gender-equitable appointment procedures

To systematically establish gender-equitable appointment procedures within the institution, it may be expedient

- 2.1 ... to work towards the formulation of clear, subject-specific, adequate goals and to set subject-specific, suitable (if necessary financial) incentives for subject areas or departments and faculties. These should be based on regular monitoring and linked to target and performance agreements and, if necessary, to sanctioning measures.
- 2.2 ... as the university leadership to structurally embed gender equality at all university levels, to implement central structures for appointment management, to further professionalise appointment processes and to provide gender-inclusive appointment guidelines and checklists as practical tools for appointment committees.
- 2.3 ... to assign dean's offices a more active strategic role in appointment procedures in order to ensure compliance with transparent and professional appointment routines in the course of continuous monitoring.
- 2.4 ... to ensure that the composition of appointment committees is at least orientated towards the cascade model. The aim is to achieve parity in each case. The involvement of external academic committee members enables helpful comparisons across institutions or federal states or even internationally.
- 2.5 ... to define routines and standards for the participation of equal opportunity officers in appointment procedures at central and decentralised level in consultation with the equal opportunity officers (e. g. time of inclusion in the process, rights and duties).
- 2.6 ... to advertise positions as broadly as possible and to check for any implicit gender bias. To further develop the understanding of quality and qualification, potential-oriented criteria should be established as part of the list of criteria, the weighting of the selected criteria should be defined and the use of cluster tenders should be examined.

- 2.7 ... to carry out transparent and structured research, including research field analyses and potential analyses, particularly prior to choosing the denomination for a professorship.
- 2.8 ... to establish central service units to support the faculties and departments in appointment procedures.
- 2.9 ... to take targeted onboarding measures to welcome new recruits to the university and retain them in the long term.

3. Establishment of more gender-equitable remuneration structures

To achieve gender equality in remuneration, it may be expedient

- 3.1 ... for the university leadership and dean's offices to carry out appointment negotiations in a gender-sensitive manner and to create a low-risk framework for negotiations by ensuring a reliable structure and transparency.
- 3.2 ... to increase awareness among members of university leadership teams and dean's offices regarding their own expectations with regard to normative behaviour in appointment negotiations, e. g. with the help of training or external advice. As a data basis, the negotiators on the university side should first receive an overview of the average salaries of all professors already appointed in a defined area.
- 3.3 ... in order to increase transparency, to establish a comprehensible system for awarding performance bonuses for service-related tasks, publish the relevant rules and processes for awarding these performance bonuses and regularly report on the process and its results, in summarised form, in the university bodies.

4. Institutional embedding of gender sensitisation and gender competence

To comprehensively embed gender sensitisation and gender competence within the institution, it may be expedient

- 4.1 ... to promote awareness of structural gender inequalities and implicit bias as well as the ability to reflect on the interaction of gender with other social categories (intersectionality) through discussion and awareness-raising programmes for all genders. For management staff at central and decentralised level and for internal university members of appointment committees, suitable target group-specific awareness-raising formats should be offered

as part of the committee's work, and participation should be strongly recommended.

- 4.2 ... to accompany the initiated measures through intensified intra-university communication that emphasises the need for increased awareness of the gender-specific dimension of issues and the importance of mutually respectful interaction. In this context, the joint responsibility of all university members for equal opportunity and gender equality should be emphasised.
- 4.3 ... in the context of awareness-raising within the university, to convey the acquisition of gender competence not as the ticking off of checklists, but as a continuous learning process in the course of organisational development – both for the institution and for its members. An institutional commitment to gender-equitable appointment practices can be part of this awareness-raising. The establishment of role models at all management levels also leads to increased internal and external visibility and acceptance.
- 4.4 ... to establish networks among (newly appointed) people of underrepresented genders and to integrate gender aspects into surveys of new appointees.
- 4.5 ... to provide coaching programmes for people of underrepresented genders not only with regard to their academic career, but also with regard to academic self-governance. Gender-specific mentoring programmes and, where appropriate, confidential counselling² should also be provided for people of underrepresented genders in management positions.³
- 4.6 ... to provide resources for individual and targeted workload reduction for academics of underrepresented genders for additional work arising from committee duties and management tasks within the university.⁴ This includes, for example, additional human resources or financial resources.
- 4.7 ... to improve the framework conditions for reconciling

² Counselling services can, for example, focus on dealing with role expectations, microaggressions, discrimination or sexism.

³ Mentoring networks, especially in medicine, should be more broadly based due to the complexity of the structures in the balance between clinical practice, research and teaching, and the entrepreneurial constraints in university hospitals that are associated with management positions in this area.

⁴ These include, for example, the office of dean or functions in appointment committees.

senior positions with care responsibilities.⁵

5. Institutional monitoring

To establish systematic institutional monitoring, it may be expedient

- 5.1 ... to establish centralised monitoring of developments in individual subject areas in order to gain insights into the effectiveness of the instruments used. The consequences of a lack of success in individual areas should also be established.
- 5.2 ... to create a transparent data situation through structured monitoring of gender-differentiated data on the awarding of merit pay by systematically analysing the gender pay gap over a longer period of time and across all subject groups.
- 5.3 ... to utilise knowledge about causes and dynamics as a basis for organisational action and to consider knowledge-based quality assurance and evaluation in established measures, particularly in the area of mentoring, from the outset. Not only quantitative but also qualitative indicators should be used to monitor the implemented training measures.

III. Entry into force and joining the voluntary commitment

The voluntary commitment comes into force after acceptance by the HRK General Assembly and is valid until revoked. Changes to the voluntary commitment require a resolution of the HRK General Assembly.

The HRK submits the voluntary commitment to the universities in order that they may join it. A university can join by submitting a declaration of membership to the HRK. The HRK maintains a list of universities that have signed up to the voluntary commitment; this list is publicly accessible.

IV. Accompanying measures

As an accompanying measure to the voluntary commitment, the signatory universities will regularly enter their institutionally established instruments – assigned to one of the five goals of the voluntary commitment – in the publicly accessible [database](#) of the Center of Excellence Women and Science CEWS. The CEWS should be commissioned to analyse the measures quantitatively and qualitatively at regular intervals at system level.

⁵ This can be achieved, for example, through family-friendly committee times, childcare during off-peak hours or the sharing of management positions.

In the interests of visibility and system-wide dialogue, the HRK will use the CEWS analysis of measures and the examples of good practice that can be generated from the database as the basis for a regular dialogue on these issues.