



National Policy Report – Germany

**WP4 - FINAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT STUDY AND
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON GEP
IMPLEMENTATION AT HEIs WITH A FOCUS ON
STUDENT'S INVOLVEMENT**

PROMoting Gender mainstrEaming iN acaDemia through thE enhancement of gendeR equality and iNclusion in hiGher education

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Date: 15/07/2026



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Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation	Meaning
AGG	General Equal Treatment Act (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz)
ART	Awareness Raising Toolkit
BayHIG	Bavarian Higher Education Innovation Act
DFG	German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft)
EU	European Union
FAME	Female Academic Medical Excellence
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
GWK	Joint Science Conference (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz)
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HRK	German Rectors' Conference (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz)
LMU	Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
WP	Work Package



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Executive Summary & Policy Briefing

Germany has a comparatively dense legal and institutional infrastructure for gender equality in higher education, yet the German implementation of PRO-GENDERING demonstrates that formal commitments do not automatically become visible, accessible or participatory institutional practice. The central policy challenge is therefore no longer only whether higher education institutions (HEIs) possess equality strategies, but whether students and staff know them, can use them and can see how institutional responsibility is translated into everyday university life. This National Policy Report assesses that implementation gap through the German PRO-GENDERING survey, the use of the project Handbook and Awareness Raising Toolkit (ART), a student-led Small Scale Students Project at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU Munich), a permanent exhibition, a National Multiplier Event, a National Stakeholder Round Table and a review of national good practices.

The European policy environment has strengthened during the project period. Gender Equality Plans remain an eligibility criterion for public bodies, research organisations and higher education establishments participating in relevant Horizon Europe actions. The European Research Executive Agency specifies four mandatory process-related requirements: a public document, dedicated resources, sex/gender-disaggregated data collection and monitoring, and training and awareness raising; it also identifies work-life balance, leadership, recruitment and career progression, the gender dimension in research and teaching, and measures against gender-based violence as recommended thematic areas. In March 2026, the European Commission adopted the Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030, continuing gender mainstreaming, targeted action and an intersectional perspective and giving renewed prominence to combating gender-based violence, including cyberviolence.¹²

Germany's national framework combines constitutional equality, anti-discrimination law, Länder higher-education legislation, research-funding standards and institutional equality strategies. Article 3 of the Basic Law establishes equality before the law and requires the state to promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and

¹ European Commission, "Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030"

² European Research Executive Agency, "Gender in EU research and innovation," Horizon Europe GEP eligibility requirements



men. The General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) creates employer duties to prevent discrimination and establishes complaint rights for employees. In Bavaria, the Bavarian Higher Education Innovation Act assigns universities explicit equality responsibilities, provides for equality representatives and requires active measures to increase the proportion of women where they are underrepresented.³⁴⁵

Despite this framework, vertical inequality in academic careers remains substantial. According to the latest official data, women accounted for 53% of graduates in 2024 and 46% of completed doctorates, but only 36% of habilitations and 30% of full-time professorships. The share of women professors has more than doubled since 2004, but the decline in representation across successive career stages remains clear. The national context is therefore characterised by simultaneous progress and persistence: equality measures have produced change, but structural losses remain visible at the transition to senior academic positions.⁶

The German PRO-GENDERING survey (n = 248) mirrors this coexistence of high support and incomplete implementation. Ninety-four per cent of respondents considered gender equality important or very important and 82% perceived improvement over the previous decade. At the same time, only 38% reported having read their institution's GEP, 44% knew little or nothing about it, and 70% of respondents who had not read it stated that they had never received institutional communication about its existence. Eighty-two per cent identified the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities as a major source of gender inequality. The policy implication is significant: formal policy adoption does not guarantee institutional literacy.

At LMU Munich, PRO-GENDERING addressed this gap by combining institutional tools with participatory learning. The Handbook supported reflection on monitoring,

³ Federal Republic of Germany, Basic Law (Grundgesetz), Article 3

⁴ Federal Republic of Germany, General Equal Treatment Act (AGG), especially Sections 12–13 on employer duties and complaint rights

⁵ Free State of Bavaria, Bavarian Higher Education Innovation Act (BayHIG), especially Articles 22–23 on equality representatives and targets

⁶ Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), “30 % Frauenanteil bei Professuren an Hochschulen 2024,” Press Release No. 442, 9 December 2025



evaluation, gender impact assessment, gender budgeting, inclusive teaching, safe learning environments and institutional responses to discrimination and harassment. The ART translated gender mainstreaming, intersectionality, unconscious bias and structural discrimination into educational and participatory formats. These resources were integrated into the Small Scale Students Project 'Discrimination Realities in Educational Contexts and Consequences for Political Education', in which students examined ableism, racism and migrantism, classism, sexism and heterosexism, transmisogyny and trans* hostility through an intersectional lens.

A permanent student-developed exhibition transformed academic learning into a public intervention. Students researched evidence, developed academically grounded content and translated it into materials for a broader university audience. The exhibition is one of the strongest German success stories because it links curriculum, participation, dissemination and campus culture. It also demonstrates a transferable model: student work can become part of institutional equality communication rather than remaining confined to a seminar room.

The National Multiplier Event brought together more than forty participants from different stakeholder groups, including students, academic and administrative staff, equality actors and people in leadership roles. The event presented project outputs and survey findings and created a forum for discussing transfer and sustainability. The hybrid National Stakeholder Round Table on 14 July 2026 then focused explicitly on the emerging policy report and its recommendations. Across both formats, stakeholders repeatedly returned to three issues: the visibility of equality policies, the usability of support structures, and the need to involve students more systematically in institutional change.

One finding requires particular precision. Students and stakeholders reported uncertainty about where to seek help in cases of discrimination, sexual harassment and gender-based violence. This does not mean that LMU lacks formal structures. LMU's Gender Equality Plan 2025–2028⁷ documents a comprehensive anti-discrimination framework, including the 2023 policy on discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault, anti-discrimination officers, conflict-resolution officers and an independent external counselling and support service. The PRO-GENDERING finding is

⁷ Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Gender Equality Plan 2025–2028, section 2.5.4 Anti-Discrimination, including the 2023 anti-discrimination policy and support structures



instead a visibility and user-journey problem: institutional provision can exist without being sufficiently known, connected or intuitively navigable from a student perspective. Stakeholder discussions also generated a concrete transfer proposal: adapting a Gender Lens Campus Walk at LMU. Participants considered this participatory method useful because it can make equality tangible in the physical and communicative campus environment by examining the visibility of counselling, accessibility, representation, safety, signage, belonging and information pathways. Used systematically, a campus walk can complement formal GEP monitoring with lived-experience evidence and can create a direct feedback loop between students, equality actors and responsible administrative units.

Key Findings

Six insights on gender equality, Gender Equality Plans and participation in higher education



01 STRONG SUPPORT, LIMITED AWARENESS

Support for gender equality is exceptionally high. At the same time, knowledge of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs), institutional measures and available support structures remains incomplete.

02 PERSISTENT STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES

Despite long-term progress, structural inequalities continue to shape academic careers, particularly regarding career progression, leadership representation, care responsibilities and access to opportunities.

03 STUDENTS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Students remain an underused resource in institutional equality governance. PRO-GENDERING demonstrates that they can contribute meaningfully to knowledge production, awareness raising, institutional reflection and the identification of barriers.

04 COMMUNICATION IS IMPLEMENTATION

Communication should not be regarded as an additional dissemination activity. The visibility, accessibility and comprehensibility of GEPs and equality measures are prerequisites for their effective implementation.

05 VISIBLE AND TRUSTED SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Support structures addressing discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence must be easy to identify, trusted and straightforward to navigate. Formal provision alone is insufficient if potential users do not know where or how to access support.

06 PARTICIPATION DRIVES INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Participatory approaches can complement quantitative monitoring and formal GEP procedures. They provide insight into lived experiences, strengthen institutional ownership and connect equality strategies with everyday campus realities.

The top policy priorities follow directly from these findings. HEIs should embed GEPs in governance, quality management, human resources and leadership accountability; develop recurring communication strategies rather than relying on publication alone, institutionalise student participation throughout the GEP cycle, modernise the user journey for counselling, reporting and complaint structures, combine quantitative indicators with qualitative and participatory evidence and provide recurring training on gender equality, intersectionality, anti-discrimination and power-sensitive leadership. Policymakers should support these changes through stable funding, common minimum



standards, comparative monitoring and funding incentives linked to credible equality strategies. Germany already offers relevant models: the Professorinnenprogramm 2030 links funding to externally assessed equality concepts, while the DFG Research-Oriented Equity and Diversity Standards embed equality and diversity as strategic organisational responsibilities.⁸⁹

Introduction and National Context

1.1 National Landscape

Gender equality in German higher education is governed through a multi-level architecture. European research policy, federal constitutional and anti-discrimination law, Länder legislation, national funding programmes, research-sector standards and institution-specific equality strategies interact. This architecture is comparatively strong in formal terms, but it distributes responsibility across many actors. Effective implementation therefore depends on coordination, transparency and the ability of students and staff to understand which instrument applies to which problem.

At European level, Horizon Europe has made GEPs an important governance instrument. For covered organisations, the eligibility criterion requires a publicly available plan endorsed by senior management, dedicated resources and expertise, arrangements for data collection and annual monitoring, and training and awareness raising. This matters beyond funding compliance. The requirements define a minimum implementation logic: equality policy must be visible, resourced, evidence-based and connected to organisational learning. The recommended thematic areas further link GEPs to work-life balance, leadership, recruitment and careers, research and teaching content and gender-based violence.

The European Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030 broadens this policy environment. Adopted on 5 March 2026, it embeds gender equality across policy areas, retains an intersectional perspective and combines mainstreaming with targeted measures. For

⁸ Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), “The DFG’s Research-Oriented Equity and Diversity Standards”

⁹ Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz (GWK), Professorinnenprogramm 2030, programme framework and requirements for equality concepts for parity



HEIs, this reinforces the expectation that equality should not be confined to a specialised office but should inform governance, education, research, employment and institutional culture. The strategy's continued focus on gender-based violence is particularly relevant to universities because prevention, reporting and support depend on institutional structures that are known and trusted before incidents occur.

The constitutional foundation in Germany is Article 3 of the Basic Law. It guarantees equality before the law, states that men and women have equal rights, and obliges the state to promote the actual implementation of equality and to eliminate existing disadvantages. This creates a positive equality mandate that goes beyond formal non-discrimination. In public higher education, equality measures can therefore be understood not as optional add-ons but as part of the public responsibility of institutions.

The AGG complements this framework in employment. It obliges employers to take necessary measures to protect employees against discrimination, including preventive measures and training, and requires information about complaint bodies to be made known. Employees have a statutory right to complain when they experience discrimination connected to employment. For universities, this is relevant because they are simultaneously educational institutions, research organisations and employers. However, the legal position of students is not identical to that of employees, which increases the importance of Länder legislation and institutional policies for comprehensive protection in study contexts.

In Bavaria, BayHIG establishes explicit equality duties for universities. It provides for representatives responsible for equality in science and the arts, requires universities to make resources available for their work, and obliges institutions to actively increase women's participation in fields and career levels where women are underrepresented. The law also embeds participation and accessibility responsibilities in the wider governance of universities. For LMU, these statutory requirements form an important part of the context in which the institutional GEP operates.

Official statistics show why sustained intervention remains necessary. At the end of 2024, women held 30% of full-time professorships in Germany, compared with 14% in 2004. Women represented 53% of graduates and 46% of doctorates in 2024, but only 36% of habilitations. The pattern varies by discipline: women held 44% of professorships in the humanities but only 17% in engineering. The data therefore show both substantial long-term progress and a persistent vertical and disciplinary imbalance.



The German survey adds an important perception dimension. Respondents overwhelmingly endorsed gender equality, but they also identified unequal care work, stereotypes, career barriers and leadership underrepresentation as continuing causes of inequality. This combination suggests that the main challenge is not simply attitudinal resistance. Many respondents support equality while still observing structural patterns that shape opportunities. Policy should therefore avoid reducing gender inequality to individual bias alone and should address recruitment, promotion, care compatibility, organisational culture and leadership responsibility.

A second challenge is institutional literacy. The survey finding that only 38% had read their institution's GEP and that 70% of non-readers had never received information about it indicates a communication deficit.¹⁰ Communication is not secondary to implementation. If members of the university cannot identify the goals, responsible units, rights, support structures or monitoring processes connected to a GEP, the plan's capacity to influence behaviour and expectations is reduced.

National sector organisations have increasingly moved toward structural approaches. The DFG's Research-Oriented Equity and Diversity Standards define personnel and structural standards for sustainable gender equality and diversity and have been a voluntary commitment of DFG member organisations since 2008. In July 2026, the DFG adopted guidance for the second reporting cycle 2026–2028, continuing an institutional reporting and learning process. The HRK likewise argues for cultural and structural change and in 2024 adopted a self-commitment on gender equity in professorial appointments, including active recruitment, gender-equitable procedures, sensitisation and monitoring.¹¹¹²

¹⁰ Numbers of the german PROGENDERING survey

¹¹ Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK), "Auf dem Weg zu mehr Geschlechtergerechtigkeit bei Berufungen – Selbstverpflichtung der deutschen Hochschulen,"

¹² Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), "The DFG's Research-Oriented Equity and Diversity Standards," current implementation process and reporting cycle 2026–2028: <https://www.dfg.de/en/basics-topics/basics-and-principles-of-funding/equal-opportunities/research-oriented>.



Taken together, the national landscape reveals a mature but unfinished policy field. Germany does not lack equality instruments; rather, it faces the task of making multiple instruments coherent, visible and effective. The German PRO-GENDERING implementation therefore focuses on the interface between formal structures and everyday institutional experience, with particular attention to student involvement.

1.2 Overview of PRO-GENDERING Implementation

LMU Munich participated in PRO-GENDERING as the German partner in a six-country consortium. The German implementation connected the project's GEP perspective with political education, awareness raising and student participation. The underlying assumption was that sustainable gender mainstreaming requires both top-down institutional responsibility and bottom-up engagement by the people who study and work within HEIs.

Two project outputs provided the principal implementation framework. The PRO-GENDERING Handbook for the Implementation of Gender Equality Plans addresses organisational dimensions such as monitoring and evaluation, gender-sensitive data, gender impact assessment, gender budgeting, inclusive teaching and learning, safe environments and institutional responses to discrimination and harassment. The ART complements this by providing accessible learning activities around gender equality, mainstreaming, intersectionality, unconscious bias, stereotypes and structural discrimination.

At LMU, these materials were integrated into the Small Scale Students Project 'Discrimination Realities in Educational Contexts and Consequences'. The seminar deliberately used an intersectional framework. Students examined ableism, racism and migrantism, classism, sexism and heterosexism, transmisogyny and trans* hostility and analysed how these dimensions can overlap in higher education institutions. This broadened the project from a narrow understanding of gender parity toward a more comprehensive analysis of equality, power and participation.

The student project combined academic reading, presentations, case analysis, collaborative work and public communication. Students were expected not only to



understand concepts but to translate them into materials that could be used by others. This culminated in a permanent exhibition addressing discrimination in higher education. The exhibition created a visible institutional output and extended the reach of the project beyond those formally enrolled in the seminar.

The National Multiplier Event at LMU brought together different organisational perspectives. It presented survey findings, introduced the Handbook and ART and enabled discussion of barriers, support structures and transfer. The event was deliberately designed as a dialogue rather than a one-way dissemination format. This helped test whether the project's interpretations resonated with stakeholders from different roles.

The National Stakeholder Round Table on 14 July 2026 provided a second validation step. The hybrid meeting discussed the emerging National Policy Report and its recommendations. Key themes included making GEPs obligatory and institutionally embedded, involving students systematically, implementing recurring training, securing sustainable funding, strengthening monitoring and improving the visibility and accessibility of support structures. The round table therefore linked WP4 evidence directly to policy formulation.

A notable outcome of stakeholder exchange was the interest in the Gender Lens Campus Walk used within the broader PRO-GENDERING context (introduced by the partners of VUB). Participants viewed the method as a practical way to inspect equality through campus space and communication. Its transfer potential for LMU lies in combining awareness raising with structured observation, documentation, responsibility assignment and follow-up.

The German implementation can therefore be described as a chain of mutually reinforcing activities: evidence collection through the survey, institutional and educational capacity building through the Handbook and ART, student co-production through the seminar; public visibility through the exhibition; stakeholder dissemination and validation through the Multiplier Event and policy translation through the Round Table. This sequence is important for interpreting impact because no single activity alone represents the project's contribution.



2. Assessment of Institutional Utility and Impact of PRO-GENDERING

2.1 Utility of PRO-GENDERING Tools

The Handbook and ART were most useful when treated as complementary rather than interchangeable resources. The Handbook addresses systems and responsibilities; the ART addresses engagement and learning. In the German context, this distinction is crucial because the survey identified a gap between formal equality policy and stakeholder awareness. Institutional architecture without communication can remain invisible, while awareness raising without structural responsibility can remain temporary. The Handbook's strongest contribution lies in converting the broad idea of gender mainstreaming into organisational fields of action. Monitoring and evaluation encourage institutions to define baselines, indicators and review cycles. Gender impact assessment and gender budgeting connect equality to decision-making and resource allocation. Guidance on inclusive teaching and safe environments broadens GEP implementation beyond recruitment and staffing. Content on discrimination and harassment connects equality governance to protection and institutional responsibility.

The ART's strongest contribution lies in accessibility and participation. Concepts such as intersectionality and unconscious bias can be difficult to translate from theory into everyday institutional reflection. Participatory exercises, discussion formats and case-based activities create entry points for students and staff who are not equality specialists. In the LMU seminar, this made it possible to connect theoretical concepts with educational settings and with participants' observations of institutional life.

The project experience suggests that the tools are particularly relevant when embedded in existing structures. The ART can be used in seminars, orientation, staff development and workshops. Handbook modules can inform equality committees, quality-management processes, leadership discussions and GEP reviews. This adaptability increases sustainability because it reduces dependence on a separate project infrastructure.

The tools also support a more intersectional understanding of equality. The German student project showed that gender cannot always be analytically separated from disability, social origin, racialisation, migration, sexuality or gender identity. This is



consistent with the DFG's current standards, which explicitly include multiple diversity dimensions and intersectionality. The practical value of PRO-GENDERING is therefore not only that it offers gender-specific tools, but that it helps institutions connect gender mainstreaming to wider equality and diversity governance.

At the same time, the German evidence cautions against claiming tool adoption on the basis of exposure alone. Participants encountered and discussed the resources, and the tools informed seminar and stakeholder activities, but the available evidence does not support a quantified claim that they were institutionally adopted across LMU. The defensible conclusion is that the tools were perceived and used as relevant implementation resources and demonstrated transfer potential for teaching, training and institutional development.

2.2 Knowledge and Capacity Shifts

The German implementation produced capacity shifts at cognitive, analytical and action-oriented levels. Students strengthened their understanding of gender mainstreaming, structural discrimination, intersectionality and institutional responsibility. They also learned to distinguish individual prejudice from organisational mechanisms and to examine how rules, norms, spaces and communication can reproduce unequal access even when formal intentions are inclusive.

The seminar design required students to apply concepts rather than only reproduce definitions. Case analysis and presentations demanded that they identify relevant mechanisms, justify interpretations and consider consequences for educational practice. This is important for gender equality work because competence involves the ability to recognise a problem in context, not merely familiarity with terminology.

The exhibition provides the clearest evidence of action-oriented learning. To create a public-facing product, students had to select evidence, translate academic concepts into accessible language, anticipate audience questions and assume responsibility for how discrimination was represented. The process therefore developed communication and knowledge-transfer competencies alongside substantive understanding.

Stakeholder events extended learning beyond students. The Multiplier Event enabled participants from different organisational positions to compare interpretations of survey results and institutional practice. The Round Table then translated evidence into



recommendations. This progression from data to dialogue to policy is a significant capacity-building mechanism because it requires participants to move from problem recognition toward feasible institutional responses.

The project also strengthened a sense of agency. Students were not positioned only as recipients of equality policies but as contributors to institutional knowledge and visibility. This matters for future GEP implementation: when students can see that their observations lead to public outputs or policy discussion, equality governance becomes less remote and more participatory.

The available evidence is primarily qualitative and project-based. It does not permit a causal claim that participants' competencies increased by a specific amount. The more appropriate conclusion is that the activities created repeated opportunities to acquire, apply and publicly communicate gender- and discrimination-related knowledge, and that the resulting outputs demonstrate applied engagement.

2.3 Student Engagement and Campus Culture

Student engagement is the distinctive contribution of the German implementation. GEPs are frequently developed in leadership, equality and administrative structures, while students encounter them indirectly. PRO-GENDERING tested a model in which students analyse institutional inequality, create public outputs and contribute to recommendations. This recognises students as stakeholders with experiential knowledge rather than merely beneficiaries of policy.

The permanent exhibition increased the visibility of discrimination-critical topics in university space. Unlike a one-off workshop, a permanent display can create repeated encounters and reach people who did not actively seek equality training. It also connects curriculum with institutional culture: student learning produces an artefact that can influence the wider campus environment.

The project simultaneously identified a gap in the visibility of support. Students and stakeholders repeatedly emphasised the need for clearer information about whom to contact, what forms of support are available, how confidentiality works and what happens after a report. This was especially relevant to discrimination, sexual harassment and gender-based violence. The issue is therefore not only whether a complaint procedure exists but whether a person can confidently navigate it.



LMU's GEP 2025–2028 documents substantial formal provision. It refers to the 2023 policy on discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault; conflict-resolution officers; six anti-discrimination officers; women's representatives; preventive training; and an independent external counselling and support service available around the clock. The project finding should therefore be read as a communication and usability challenge rather than an absence-of-policy claim.

This distinction has broader policy relevance. Universities often organise support by legal competence or administrative responsibility, while users experience a problem as a single situation. A student may not know whether an experience should be classified as discrimination, sexual harassment, a conflict, a study-related complaint or a matter for external counselling. User-centred service design should therefore provide a clear first entry point and explain options without requiring the affected person to understand the institution's internal division of responsibilities.

Student participation can also improve institutional diagnosis. Students move through lecture halls, libraries, digital portals, advising systems and informal campus spaces in ways that differ from staff. Their observations can reveal whether support information is visible, whether language is understandable, whether spaces feel accessible and safe, and whether representation communicates belonging. This is the rationale for participatory tools such as a Gender Lens Campus Walk.

For campus culture, the central lesson is that participation must have consequences. Consultation without feedback can reduce trust. If students contribute observations or recommendations, institutions should communicate what was accepted, what was not, who is responsible and when progress will be reviewed. Closing this feedback loop turns participation from symbolic inclusion into governance.



2.4 Notable “Success Stories”

PRO-GENDERING · ERASMUS+ PROJECT

Success Stories

Two participatory practices from the project – one realised, one ready for transfer



01 SUCCESS STORY · LMU

Student-led permanent exhibition

The exhibition is the strongest example of how PRO-GENDERING linked teaching, participation and institutional visibility at LMU. Students transformed research on multiple forms of discrimination into accessible public materials.

The output remained available beyond the seminar, extended the project’s reach and demonstrated that student-produced knowledge can become part of campus awareness work. The model is scalable because other courses or faculties could use a similar process with different equality themes.

02 TRANSFER POTENTIAL · VUB

Gender Lens Campus Walk

During stakeholder discussions, students and equality actors showed strong interest in adapting a participatory campus walk. The value of the method lies in its combination of awareness and diagnosis.

A structured walk could examine physical accessibility, visibility of counselling safety, representation, signage and information pathways; document findings; assign responsibilities; and repeat the assessment after changes. This would make student participation directly relevant to GEP monitoring and organisational learning.

TAKEAWAY

One practice shows what students can produce and leave behind; the other shows how their perspective can feed directly into GEP monitoring.



3. Reach and Dissemination of PRO-GENDERING

3.1 Direct Engagement

Direct engagement occurred through the Small Scale Students Project, the National Multiplier Event, the National Stakeholder Round Table, project meetings and direct presentation of the Handbook and ART. The seminar provided the deepest form of engagement because students worked with the issues over an extended period, applied concepts and produced their own public outputs.

The National Multiplier Event reached more than forty participants from different institutional roles. This diversity mattered because equality implementation looks different from the perspective of a student, a lecturer, an administrator, an equality officer or a person with leadership responsibility. Bringing these perspectives together enabled the project to test whether survey findings were recognised across roles and to identify practical implementation barriers.

The hybrid National Stakeholder Round Table on 14 July 2026 had a more policy-oriented function. It discussed the emerging German National Policy Report and translated evidence into recommendations for HEIs and policymakers. The discussion highlighted institutional anchoring of GEPs, systematic student participation, training, sustainable funding, monitoring and support structures. It therefore served as a qualitative validation mechanism for WP4.

Direct tool dissemination took place within these activities. Participants were introduced to the Handbook and ART and discussed their applicability. The evidence supports describing the tools as relevant and transferable resources; it does not support a precise institution-wide adoption rate. This report therefore avoids overstating reach and distinguishes verified participant figures from broader potential use.



3.2 Indirect Reach

The permanent exhibition was the central instrument of indirect reach. By placing student-developed content in a public university setting, the project created opportunities for engagement by students, staff and visitors who had not participated directly in the seminar. Repeated exposure is important for cultural change because it normalises discussion of discrimination, gender equality and inclusion as legitimate institutional concerns.

Additional indirect dissemination occurred through project documentation, internal communication, newsletters and participants' professional networks. People attending the Multiplier Event or Round Table could transfer project concepts into faculties, administrative units, equality work, teaching and student contexts. The Handbook and ART can also circulate independently of the original activities and therefore have a longer potential life cycle than a single event.

Because digital channels were not measured with a common analytics framework, the German implementation cannot provide a robust aggregate number for indirect reach. Assigning an estimated figure would risk overstating impact. The report therefore distinguishes verified direct participation from qualitative dissemination pathways and treats the exhibition's continued public availability as an important but not numerically quantified form of reach.

Future projects should improve this evidence base by defining dissemination indicators in advance: downloads, webpage visits, newsletter reach, event registrations, repeat use of tools, course integration and follow-up activities. Such data would make it easier to distinguish exposure from actual uptake.



4. Barriers and Sustainability Needs Identified from PRO-GENDERING

4.1 Barriers and Obstacles

Four interconnected barriers emerged. The first is structural inequality across academic careers. Official data show that women's representation decreases substantially between graduation and professorship. Survey respondents likewise identified care responsibilities, stereotypes, unequal career opportunities and underrepresentation in leadership. These patterns require structural responses in recruitment, promotion, work-life compatibility and leadership accountability, not awareness campaigns alone.

The second barrier is communication. The survey's GEP awareness figures indicate that formal policies are not necessarily part of everyday institutional knowledge. A document can satisfy publication requirements without being actively communicated. This is particularly important because Horizon Europe itself defines active communication as part of the logic of a public GEP. Universities therefore need recurring, audience-specific communication at enrolment, onboarding, supervision, leadership transitions and other relevant moments.

The third barrier is fragmentation of support structures. Students' uncertainty about help services suggests that multiple specialised contact points can become difficult to navigate when their roles are not clearly explained. For gender-based violence or sexual harassment, uncertainty may delay help-seeking. Institutions should therefore map the user journey from first information to counselling, informal resolution, formal complaint and follow-up and make the differences between these options transparent.

The fourth barrier is organisational culture and power. Universities contain hierarchical and dependency relationships: supervisors evaluate doctoral researchers, professors influence careers, and students may depend on instructors for grades or recommendations. In such settings, formal rights are necessary but may not be sufficient if individuals fear negative consequences. Prevention therefore requires leadership standards, confidentiality, protection against retaliation and credible escalation routes.



Resistance to equality topics should also be interpreted carefully. The German survey indicates very high normative support for gender equality, so the main barrier identified in this project is not broad rejection. Resistance may instead appear as implementation fatigue, uncertainty about responsibilities, competition for resources, scepticism about terminology or the assumption that existing policies have already solved the problem. Navigating such resistance requires evidence, role clarity and practical relevance.

A final barrier is the project logic itself. Equality initiatives are often funded temporarily, while the problems they address are long-term. If knowledge, tools and participation formats depend on individual champions or short funding cycles, successful practices can disappear when personnel or priorities change. Sustainability therefore needs to be designed into implementation from the beginning.

4.2 Sustainability Needs

Sustainability requires institutional embedding. The Handbook, ART and student participation formats should be connected to structures that continue after project funding: staff development, teaching, student orientation, equality offices, quality management and leadership reporting. The aim is not to preserve every project activity unchanged but to retain the functions that proved valuable.

Human resources are essential. Equality monitoring, anti-discrimination counselling, prevention of gender-based violence, training and participatory processes all require professional time. Where these tasks are added without protected capacity, sustainability becomes dependent on personal commitment. HEIs should therefore connect equality objectives to staffing plans, workload allocation and professional expertise.

Financial sustainability matters at both small and large scales. A student exhibition or campus walk is comparatively low-cost but still requires coordination, accessible materials, space and follow-up. Counselling and complaint structures require stable professional funding. National and Länder programmes should therefore support both structural infrastructure and participatory innovation rather than funding only short-lived campaigns.

Monitoring is a further sustainability requirement. Institutions should define indicators for representation, recruitment, career progression, training reach, GEP awareness,



student participation, support-service awareness and user experience. Quantitative indicators should be complemented by qualitative methods that identify barriers not visible in administrative data.

The Professorinnenprogramm 2030 demonstrates how external incentives can strengthen sustainability by linking funding to positively assessed institutional equality concepts. Its evaluation concluded that the programme produced effects beyond numerical representation, including stronger equality structures and increased institutional importance of equality work. This is relevant to PRO-GENDERING because project tools are more likely to endure when embedded in incentive and accountability structures.¹³¹⁴

Sustainability also depends on knowledge transfer. Materials should be stored where staff and students can find them; responsibilities for updating them should be clear; and new cohorts should be introduced to the resources. Student participation should be recurrent rather than tied to one seminar cohort. A campus walk, for example, could be repeated periodically and linked to a documented improvement cycle.

Finally, sustainability requires leadership ownership. Equality offices cannot carry institutional transformation alone. Senior leadership, faculties, human resources, student services, teaching development and facilities management all hold parts of the implementation responsibility. A mature GEP should therefore specify not only goals but accountable owners, timelines, resources and review mechanisms.

¹³ Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz (GWK), Evaluation des Professorinnenprogramms des Bundes und der Länder: Dritte Programmphase und Gesamtevaluation, January 2022: https://www.gwk-bonn.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Dokumente/Papers/Evaluation_des_Professorinnenprogramms_Bericht_Januar_2022.pdf.

¹⁴ Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz (GWK), Professorinnenprogramm 2030, programme framework and requirements for equality concepts for parity, current 2026 basis: https://www.gwk-bonn.de/fileadmin/Redaktion/Dokumente/Papers/Grundlagen_2026_final.pdf.



5. Mapping External Good Practices Nationwide

EXTERNAL GOOD PRACTICE #1

Professorinnenprogramm 2030

Profile · Germany's largest national programme for gender equality in higher education



IMPLEMENTING INSTITUTION	Joint programme of the German Federal Government and the Länder, coordinated through the Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz (GWK) and implemented by participating German higher education institutions.
TARGET AUDIENCE	- HEI leadership and management - Gender equality offices - Academic staff and researchers - Early-career female academics and professors
BRIEF DESCRIPTION	Universities must first submit a comprehensive institutional gender equality strategy — only positively evaluated equality concepts are eligible for funding. The programme therefore combines: - structural institutional change, - gender equality planning, - recruitment and retention of women professors, - integration of gender equality into university governance. Rather than funding individuals alone, the programme incentivises universities to embed gender equality objectives into their organisational development and strategic planning.



Source: gwk-bonn.de · Professorinnenprogramm 2030

EXTERNAL GOOD PRACTICE #1

Impact, comparison and policy takeaway

Professorinnenprogramm 2030 · running since 2008, now in its fourth funding phase



EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS / IMPACT	Independent evaluations commissioned by the GWK found that the programme: - significantly increased the strategic importance of gender equality within participating universities; - strengthened institutional gender equality structures; - improved recruitment and career opportunities for women in academia; - stimulated the development of sustainable Gender Equality Plans and monitoring systems. The programme has become a national benchmark for gender equality governance in German higher education.
COMPARISON WITH PRO-GENDERING	Compared with the PRO-GENDERING Handbook and Awareness Raising Toolkit, the Professorinnenprogramm focuses on institutional transformation at governance level rather than primarily on awareness raising or student engagement. It complements PRO-GENDERING because: - PRO-GENDERING provides practical tools and capacity-building resources; - the Professorinnenprogramm shows how these principles can be embedded into university-wide strategies, leadership structures and funding mechanisms.
POLICY TAKEAWAY	A key transferable element is the linkage between funding eligibility and the quality of institutional Gender Equality Plans. National policymakers could: - require evidence-based Gender Equality Plans as a condition for selected public funding schemes; - establish external review mechanisms for equality strategies; - reward universities that demonstrate measurable progress through dedicated funding incentives.

EXTERNAL GOOD PRACTICE #2

DFG Research-Oriented Equity and Diversity Standards

Profile · Forschungsorientierte Gleichstellungs- und Diversitätsstandards · Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)



IMPLEMENTING INSTITUTION	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)
TARGET AUDIENCE	- Universities and research institutions - University leadership - Researchers and research managers - Equality officers and diversity practitioners
BRIEF DESCRIPTION	Introduced in 2008 as research-oriented gender equality standards and later expanded into Equity and Diversity Standards. The initiative requires participating research institutions to systematically integrate gender equality and diversity into: - governance structures, - recruitment and promotion procedures, - research management, - leadership development, - monitoring and reporting systems. The standards encourage institutions to move beyond isolated equality measures and adopt a whole-organisation approach to equality and inclusion.



Source: dfg.de · Gleichstellungsstandards

EXTERNAL GOOD PRACTICE #2

Impact, comparison and policy takeaway

DFG Equity and Diversity Standards · one of the most influential frameworks in German academia



EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS / IMPACT	Key indicators of success include: - widespread adoption across German universities and research institutions; - integration of equality objectives into institutional development plans; - regular monitoring and reporting processes; - strong influence on organisational culture and research funding practices. The standards are widely recognised as having professionalised equality management within the German research system.										
COMPARISON WITH PRO-GENDERING	The DFG standards complement PRO-GENDERING by providing a governance and accountability framework. <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>PRO-GENDERING FOCUSES ON</th> <th>DFG STANDARDS FOCUS ON</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>- awareness raising,</td> <td>- institutional accountability,</td> </tr> <tr> <td>- practical guidance,</td> <td>- performance monitoring,</td> </tr> <tr> <td>- student engagement,</td> <td>- leadership responsibility,</td> </tr> <tr> <td>- small-scale equality initiatives.</td> <td>- long-term organisational change.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Together, the approaches cover both bottom-up and top-down dimensions of Gender Equality Plan implementation.	PRO-GENDERING FOCUSES ON	DFG STANDARDS FOCUS ON	- awareness raising,	- institutional accountability,	- practical guidance,	- performance monitoring,	- student engagement,	- leadership responsibility,	- small-scale equality initiatives.	- long-term organisational change.
PRO-GENDERING FOCUSES ON	DFG STANDARDS FOCUS ON										
- awareness raising,	- institutional accountability,										
- practical guidance,	- performance monitoring,										
- student engagement,	- leadership responsibility,										
- small-scale equality initiatives.	- long-term organisational change.										
POLICY TAKEAWAY	The most scalable element is the use of common national standards combined with institutional self-assessment and monitoring. National policymakers could establish a common national framework for GEPs across HEIs, require periodic reporting on equality indicators, and integrate gender equality performance into research funding and institutional evaluation systems.										



Source: dfg.de · Chancengleichheit / Gleichstellungsstandards



6. Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations emerging from the German implementation of PRO-GENDERING point towards a common overarching conclusion: the principal challenge for gender equality in higher education is no longer simply the existence of formal strategies, but their translation into institutional practices that are visible, accessible, participatory and sustainable. This perspective was particularly underlined during the National Stakeholder Round Table, where the survey findings and the experiences gained through the Small Scale Students Project, the permanent exhibition and the National Multiplier Event were discussed with stakeholders and reflected upon in terms of their practical implications. The discussion reinforced the view that Gender Equality Plans can only develop their transformative potential when they are embedded in everyday institutional governance and when students, staff and other members of the university community are able to recognise how these commitments relate to their own experiences.

A central conclusion of the Round Table was therefore that Gender Equality Plans should not remain primarily strategic or administrative documents. Participants stressed the importance of connecting equality objectives more systematically with university governance, quality management, human resources, research, teaching development and leadership. Institutional responsibility needs to be identifiable and sustained over time. At the same time, the discussion made clear that formal institutional anchoring alone is insufficient. One of the most important lessons emerging from the German survey and subsequently underlined in the stakeholder dialogue was the discrepancy between strong general support for gender equality and considerably more limited knowledge of concrete Gender Equality Plans, institutional measures and available support structures. Communication was consequently discussed not merely as a dissemination activity accompanying implementation, but as an essential component of implementation itself. Equality policies can only become effective if members of the university know that they exist, understand their relevance and can identify the actors, services and procedures connected to them.

The Round Table also highlighted the importance of broadening the evidence base through which institutional equality policies are assessed. Quantitative monitoring



remains indispensable for identifying inequalities in representation, recruitment, career progression, leadership and other institutional processes. However, participants stressed that quantitative indicators alone cannot adequately capture how equality policies and institutional structures are experienced in everyday university life. Student consultations, qualitative discussions and other participatory approaches were therefore regarded as important complementary instruments. In this context, the Gender Lens Campus Walk attracted particular interest. Students and equality stakeholders considered such an approach especially useful because it would enable the university community to examine the campus from the perspective of accessibility, visibility, representation, safety, inclusion and belonging. The discussion consequently suggested that a similar participatory approach at LMU could help identify barriers that remain difficult to detect through conventional institutional monitoring and could simultaneously strengthen student ownership of equality processes.

Closely connected to this was the recognition that students should play a considerably stronger role in institutional equality governance. The experiences of the Small Scale Students Project and the permanent exhibition demonstrated that students are capable of contributing far beyond the role of recipients of equality policies. They can generate knowledge, identify institutional barriers, translate academic debates into accessible formats and contribute directly to awareness raising and institutional reflection. During the National Stakeholder Round Table, this potential was explicitly underlined. Student participation should therefore be understood as an integral component of institutional equality work rather than as an occasional consultation mechanism. Meaningful participation requires opportunities to contribute during the identification of needs, the formulation of priorities, the implementation of measures and their subsequent evaluation. It also requires institutional responsiveness: where students contribute perspectives and recommendations, they should be able to see whether and how these contributions influence subsequent decisions.

The stakeholder discussion further emphasized that such participation requires appropriate institutional conditions. Student-led exhibitions, research projects, peer-learning formats, awareness campaigns and participatory campus assessments can generate significant institutional value, but their sustainability depends on access to



resources, academic or administrative support, suitable spaces and institutional visibility. The German implementation of PRO-GENDERING demonstrated how a university course can generate outputs with relevance beyond the classroom when students are provided with opportunities to translate their learning into public and institutional engagement. Participants therefore considered it important to create more permanent interfaces between teaching, student participation and institutional equality work rather than relying exclusively on temporary project structures.

Another major theme emerging from the National Stakeholder Round Table concerned the accessibility and visibility of support structures, particularly in relation to discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence. This issue was discussed as one of the areas in which the distinction between formal institutional provision and the lived experience of students is especially important. Participants did not primarily question whether support structures formally exist; rather, the discussion highlighted whether potential users know about them, understand their respective functions and are able to navigate them in situations in which support is required. Students in particular stressed the need for more differentiated, visible and contemporary information about available forms of assistance and counselling on campus. The discussion indicated that existing structures may appear fragmented from a user perspective and that uncertainty can arise regarding where to turn, which service is responsible, what confidentiality can be expected and what consequences different reporting options may entail.

The modernization of these support structures was therefore identified as an important priority. Participants emphasized that institutional responses to gender-based violence and discrimination should be considered from the perspective of the person seeking support rather than primarily from the perspective of organizational responsibilities. Information should enable students and staff to understand available options quickly and without requiring prior knowledge of university structures. This implies clearer pathways between initial information, confidential counselling, informal forms of assistance, formal complaint mechanisms and, where necessary, referral to specialised services. Particular attention was given to the need for low-threshold and easily identifiable access points as well as accessible and comprehensible digital information.



At the same time, the Round Table discussion underlined that communication about support cannot begin only after an incident has occurred. Information concerning discrimination, harassment and gender-based violence should form part of a broader preventive institutional culture. Participants therefore emphasized the value of making support structures visible during student orientation, staff onboarding, supervision processes, leadership development and recurring awareness-raising activities. The broader objective is to create an environment in which members of the university community already know where support can be found before they experience a critical situation. Such an approach also requires continued work on prevention, awareness of power relations and clear institutional expectations regarding respectful and non-discriminatory conduct.

The discussion furthermore reinforced the need for an intersectional understanding of both equality policies and support structures. Experiences of gender-based discrimination or violence cannot always be separated from racism, ableism, classism, homophobia, trans* hostility or institutional dependency relationships. Participants therefore underlined the importance of professional and confidential support capable of recognising these intersections. This perspective corresponds closely to the approach developed through the Small Scale Students Project, in which different forms of discrimination were deliberately examined in relation to one another rather than as isolated phenomena. The Round Table demonstrated that this intersectional perspective is equally relevant for institutional practice.

Beyond support services, stakeholders also discussed the need for sustained capacity building across the university. Gender equality, intersectionality, anti-discrimination, unconscious bias, power-sensitive leadership and the prevention of harassment were identified as areas that should be addressed through recurring and role-specific professional development. The discussion emphasized that awareness raising should not be understood as a one-off activity. Different groups within a university hold different responsibilities and therefore require different forms of preparation. Leadership, supervisors, appointment committees, teaching staff, administrative staff and employees working directly with students all encounter distinct situations in which equality considerations become relevant. Sustainable implementation



therefore requires training that is connected to these concrete institutional responsibilities.

The persistence of inequalities across academic career trajectories also remained an important concern. Participants emphasized that measures supporting individual career development need to be accompanied by structural approaches addressing recruitment, promotion, leadership opportunities and institutional cultures. Mentoring, networking and leadership development can make important contributions, but they should form part of a broader strategy aimed at creating transparent and equitable career pathways. In this respect, the Round Table discussion supported an understanding of equality work that combines targeted support for underrepresented groups with systematic reflection on the structures through which academic careers are organised.

At the policy level, the stakeholder dialogue pointed towards the importance of continuity and long-term institutional capacity. Gender equality work should not depend primarily on temporary projects or individual commitment. Participants underlined that sustainable implementation requires stable responsibilities, appropriate staffing and resources for communication, training, monitoring, counselling and participatory activities. External funding and policy frameworks can provide important incentives, but their long-term value depends on whether project-based innovations become integrated into ordinary institutional processes after funding periods end.

This consideration also informed the discussion of monitoring and accountability. Stakeholders supported the development of clearer and more comparable expectations for robust GEP implementation while simultaneously recognising institutional autonomy. Such expectations should not focus exclusively on representation data but also consider whether institutional measures are known, whether students participate in equality processes, whether support structures are accessible and trusted, and whether implementation responsibilities are transparent. The discussion therefore suggested moving towards a more comprehensive understanding of institutional progress in which formal compliance, quantitative outcomes and lived experiences are considered together.



Finally, the National Stakeholder Round Table emphasized the importance of continued exchange between higher education institutions. Participants recognised that many universities face comparable implementation challenges and that successful approaches should therefore be shared rather than repeatedly developed in isolation. The transfer of practices should extend beyond presenting successful examples and should also address the conditions, resources and institutional processes that make them effective. Participatory approaches such as the Gender Lens Campus Walk, student-led exhibitions, targeted career networks and structured mechanisms for institutional monitoring were discussed as examples from which universities can learn when adapted carefully to their own contexts.

Taken together, the National Stakeholder Round Table substantially reinforced the central conclusion emerging from the German PRO-GENDERING activities. Sustainable gender equality requires a transition from the existence of formal structures towards their effective institutional use. For LMU and for German higher education more broadly, the next step is therefore not simply to add further policies, but to ensure that existing and future equality infrastructures are visible, understandable, accessible, adequately resourced and continuously evaluated from the perspective of those who are expected to use them. The discussions particularly highlighted student participation, improved communication, modernised support structures and participatory institutional assessment as important elements of this transition. In this sense, PRO-GENDERING has demonstrated the value of connecting formal governance instruments with awareness raising, lived experience and stakeholder dialogue. Gender Equality Plans become transformative not through their existence alone, but when the university community can recognise them in institutional practice, participate in their development and trust the structures through which their objectives are implemented.



KEY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1**Make Gender Equality Plans visible, operational and accountable.**

GEPs should move beyond formal compliance and become integral parts of university governance, quality management, teaching, research and human-resource development. Clear responsibilities, measurable objectives and regular monitoring are essential. Crucially, GEPs must also be actively communicated so that students and staff understand their objectives, measures and relevance.

2**Institutionalise meaningful student participation.**

Students should be recognised as active partners in gender equality governance rather than solely as beneficiaries of institutional policies. They should participate throughout the GEP cycle—from needs assessment and priority setting to implementation and evaluation. Student-led research, exhibitions, awareness activities and participatory formats should receive sustainable institutional support.

3**Modernise and increase the visibility of support structures for discrimination and gender-based violence.**

Universities should ensure that counselling, reporting and support services are easy to find, understand and navigate. The National Stakeholder Round Table particularly underlined the need for clearer and more differentiated information on available assistance. Support structures should be confidential, low-threshold, accessible and intersectional, with particular attention to sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

4**Combine institutional monitoring with lived-experience and participatory evidence.**

Quantitative indicators alone cannot capture how equality is experienced in everyday university life. Universities should complement statistical monitoring with student consultations, qualitative assessments and participatory methods. The strong interest expressed in the Gender Lens Campus Walk suggests that such an approach should be piloted at LMU as a practical instrument for identifying barriers related to accessibility, safety, representation, support-service visibility and belonging.

5**Establish continuous capacity building instead of one-off awareness raising.**

Gender equality, intersectionality, anti-discrimination, unconscious bias, power-sensitive leadership and the prevention of harassment should become recurring elements of professional development. Training should be tailored to the responsibilities of university leadership, supervisors, appointment committees, teaching staff and student-facing personnel.

6**Secure sustainable institutional and political responsibility.**

Gender equality cannot depend primarily on temporary projects or individual commitment. HEIs and policymakers should provide stable staffing, long-term funding and clear accountability structures. Funding, monitoring and quality frameworks should support robust GEP implementation while facilitating the transfer of effective practices between universities.

CORE POLICY MESSAGE

The next step is not simply to create more equality policies, but to ensure that existing structures are known, accessible, trusted, adequately resourced and actively co-owned by the university community.

The National Stakeholder Round Table particularly reinforced three priorities: meaningful student participation, modern and visible support structures—especially regarding gender-based violence—and the use of participatory approaches to connect formal Gender Equality Plans with everyday campus realities.

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