



Advancing Gender Equity and Diversity in German Higher Education Institutions: Policies and Strategies

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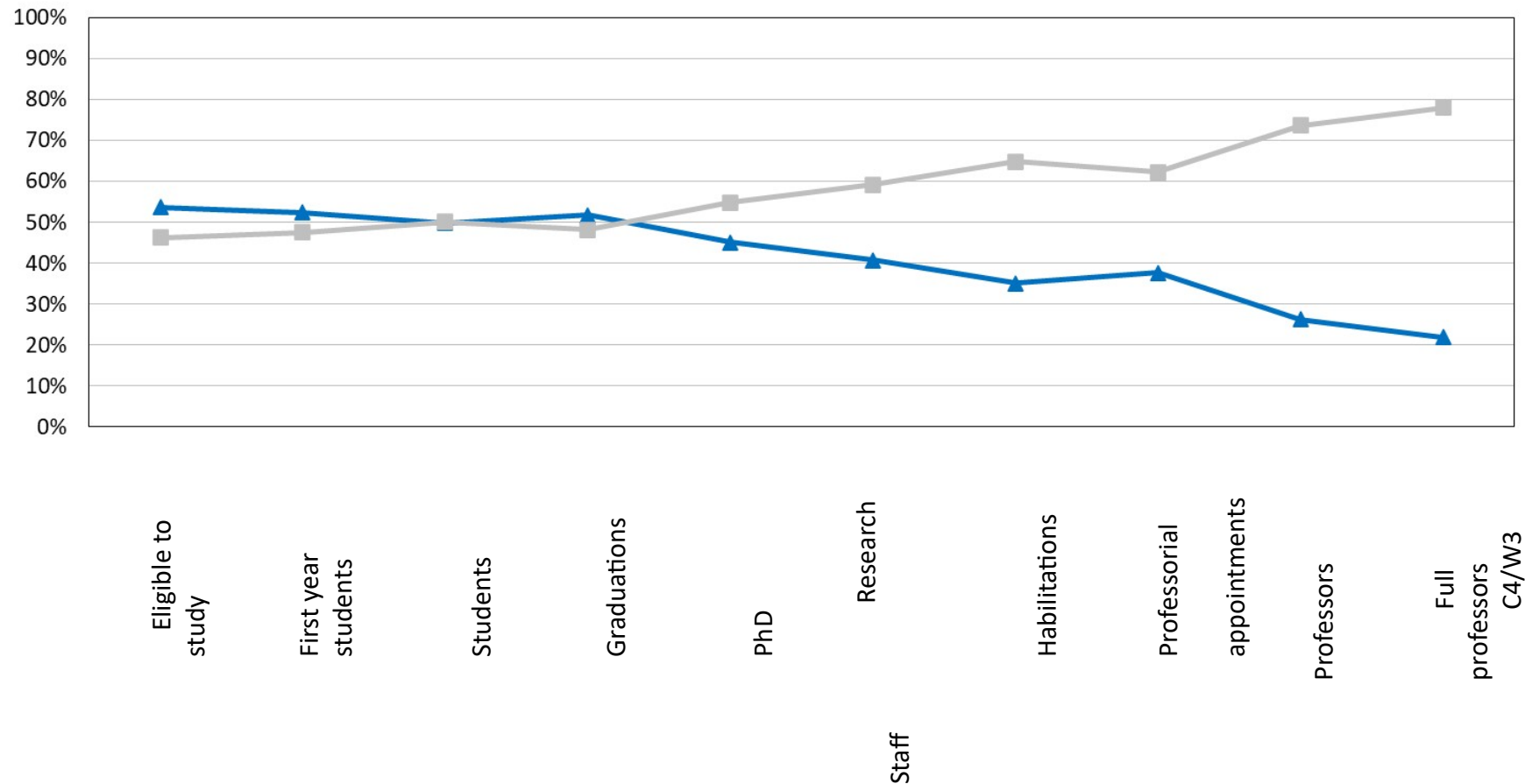
Overview

- 1) The Leaky Pipeline
- 2) Background: Rules and Regulations
- 3) On the Relationship Between Gender, Diversity and Excellence
- 4) Gender Equality and Diversity Policies: Achievements and Challenges
- 5) Conclusion: Towards Inclusive Excellence?



The Leaky Pipeline

Shares of Women and Men in the Qualification Process, 2020





Background: Rules and Regulations

German Legal Framework for Gender Equality

- Basic Law (Grundgesetz, Art. 3 GG): Stipulates gender equality and requires the state to actively promote it.
- Federal Act on Gender Equality (BGleiG): Stipulates the implementation of gender equality in bodies of the federal administration and in federal courts
- Higher Education Acts of the Federal States (Landeshochschulgesetze) : Stipulates the implementation of gender equality measures in higher education institutions.
- General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) (2006): “aims at preventing and eliminating discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual identity” (Art. 1; own translation).

German Legal Framework for Gender Equality

Higher Education Acts (vary significantly across federal states):

- Stipulate the integration of gender equality goals into institutional policies.
- Appointment of gender equality officers is mandatory.
- Monitoring and reporting mechanisms in order to measure progress.
- Consideration of gender equality goals in recruitment processes.

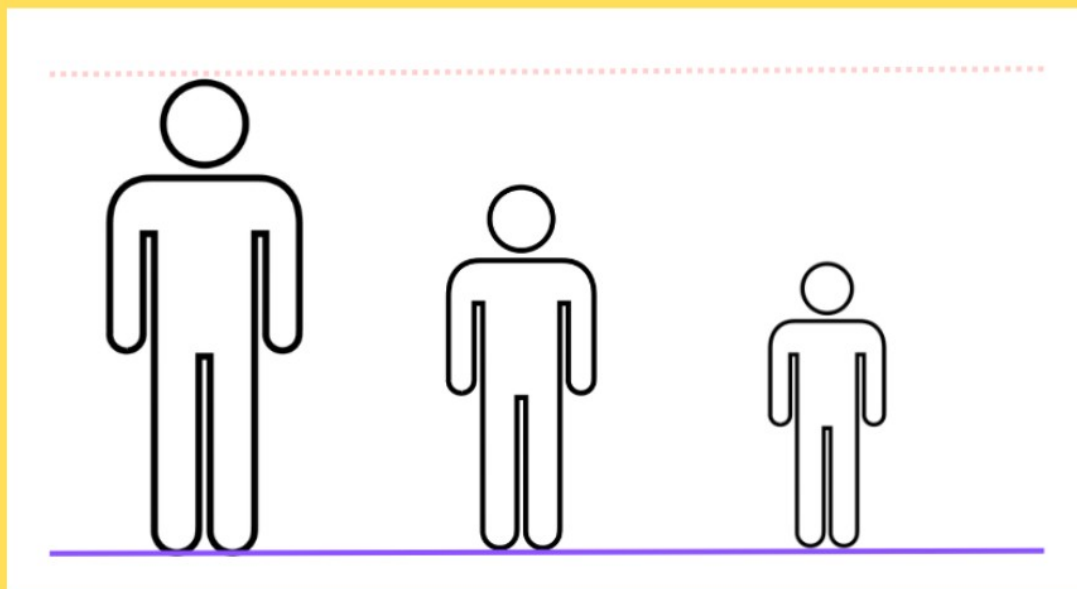
German Legal Framework for Gender Equality

Gender Equality Officers:

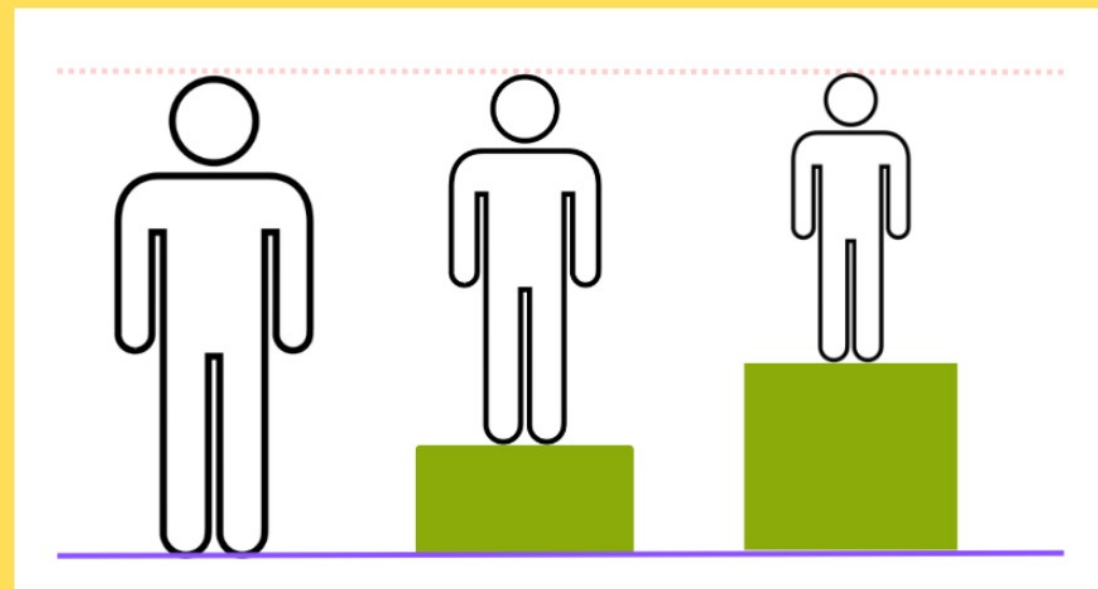
- Are elected for two to four years.
- Work on central and departmental levels.
- Are independent agents of change (degree of power varies significantly, i.e. Berlin vs. Bavaria).
- Advise the university leadership and departments on gender equality measures.
- Support the structural and individual advancement of women.

From Gender Equality to Diversity: Context Factors

- General Equal Treatment Act (AGG)
- Excellence Initiative, which started in 2005, was key for the consideration of gender equality and diversity goals in German higher education.
- Rationale is to broaden the pool of excellent scholars for recruitment.
- DFG's "Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality" were introduced in 2008 and were slightly changed ("equity") and expanded to diversity in 2022.



Equality



Equity



FAPESP
WEEK
GERMANY

March 25-26th, 2025



DFG Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft

On the Relationship Between Gender, Diversity and Excellence

Gender Equity and Diversity are key for Excellence

“Excellent science needs diversity and originality. In order to ensure that all relevant sections of society are addressed in the long term, science and the humanities have to appropriately represent all these areas as well. This happens not just through the structure of the subjects in science and humanities but also through the individuals who research and teach in these subject areas. The DFG believes that no one should be disadvantaged in their career on the basis of academically irrelevant factors such as gender, origin, age or state of health.”

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) vs. Meritocracy?

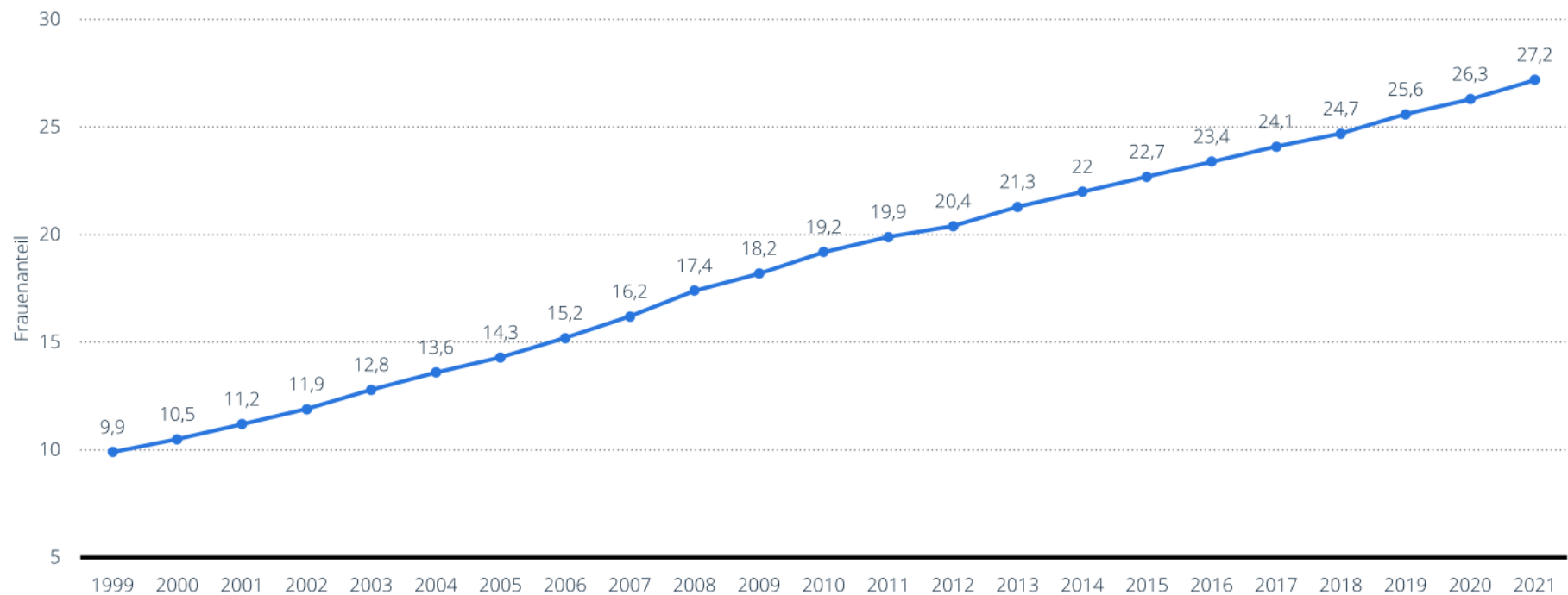
- The idea of higher education as an institution that creates and expands opportunities and accommodates both “excellence (progress) and equity (justice)” (Meyer et al. 2007: 188) has rapidly diffused around the world.
- Yet, access to inclusion, resources, and power in the higher education system is based on the ideal of meritocratic principles.
- Meritocracy is based on the idea that rewards, promotions, and opportunities should be distributed based on individual performance and achievements rather than factors such as social status, connections or other non-merit-based criteria.
- How to fairly measure and assess ‘achievements’ in a system (historically) shaped by exclusion and structural inequalities?



Gender Equality and Diversity Policies: Achievements and Challenges



Female Share of Professors, 1999-2021

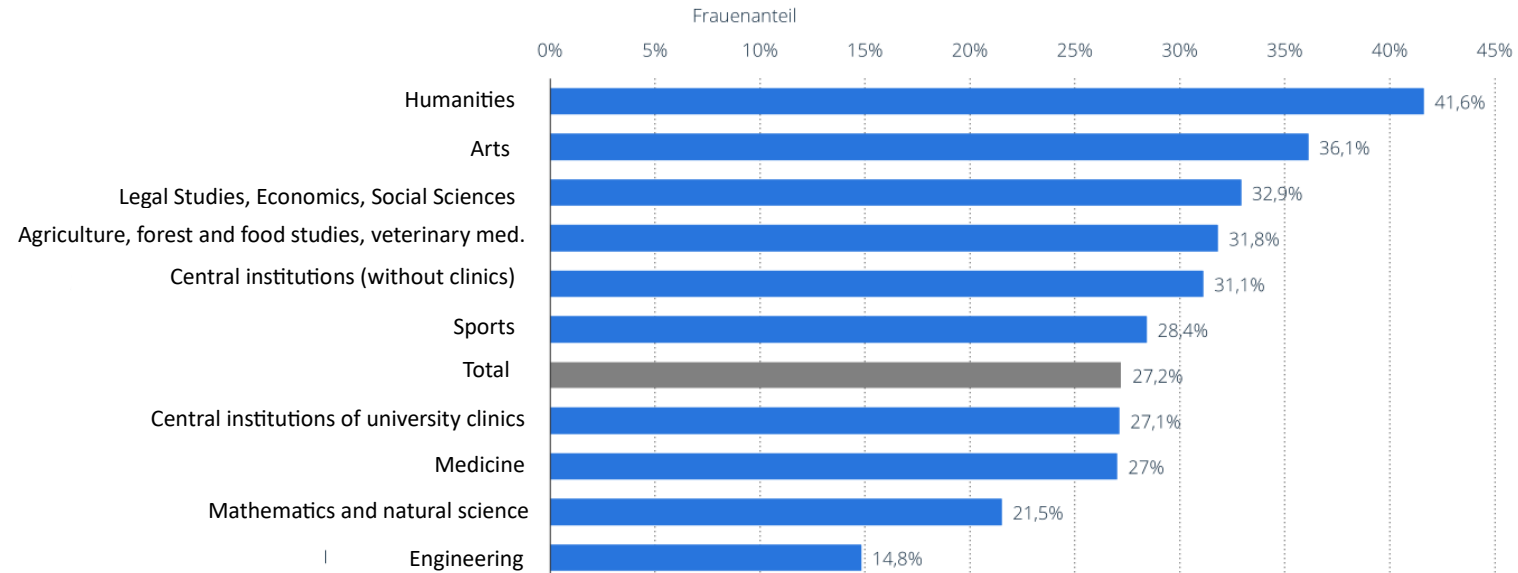


Hinweis(e): Deutschland

Weitere Angaben zu dieser Statistik, sowie Erläuterungen zu Fußnoten, sind auf [Seite 8](#) zu finden.

Quelle(n): Statistisches Bundesamt; [ID 160367](#)

Female Share of Professors, Subject Groups , 2021



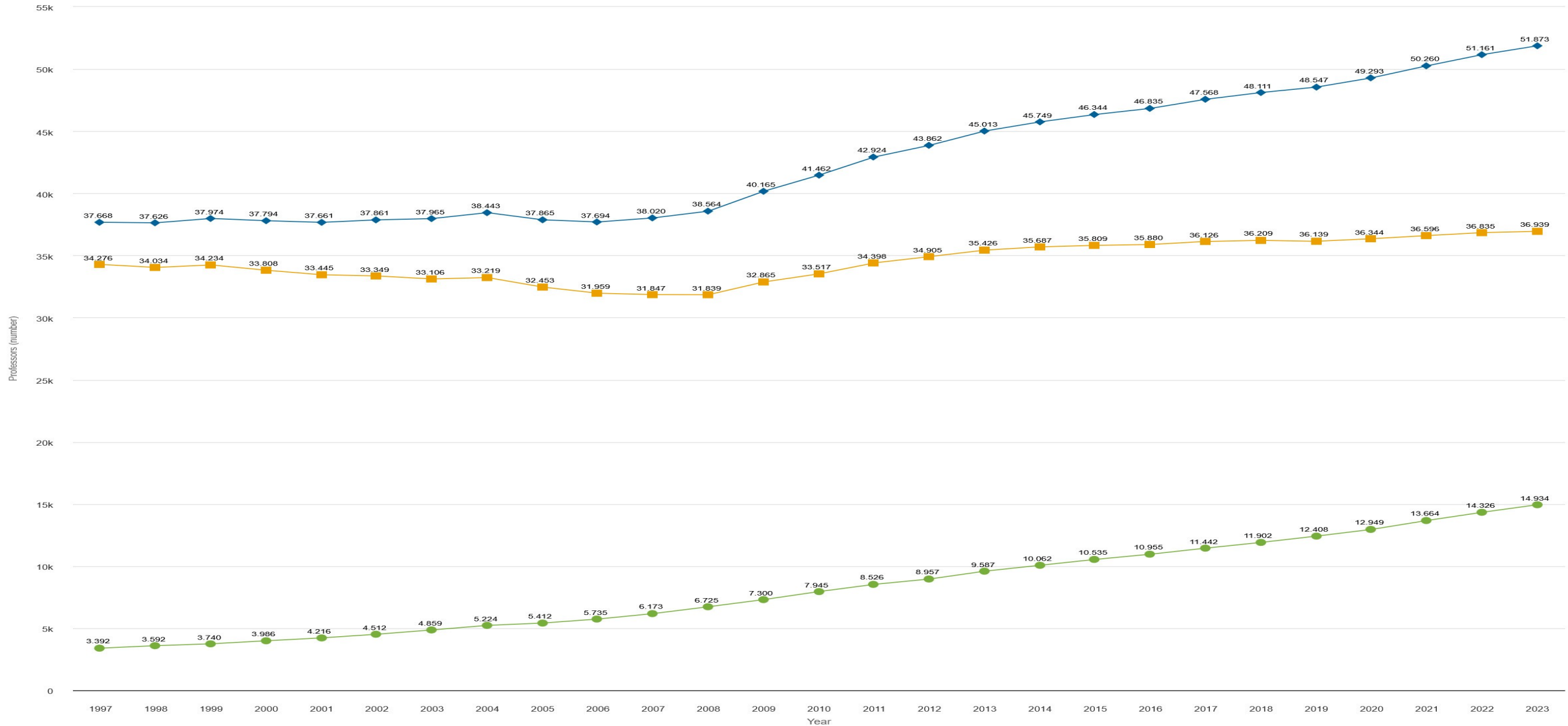
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Quelle(n): Statistisches Bundesamt; [ID 197908](#)

Professors in all Subject Groups, 1997-2023

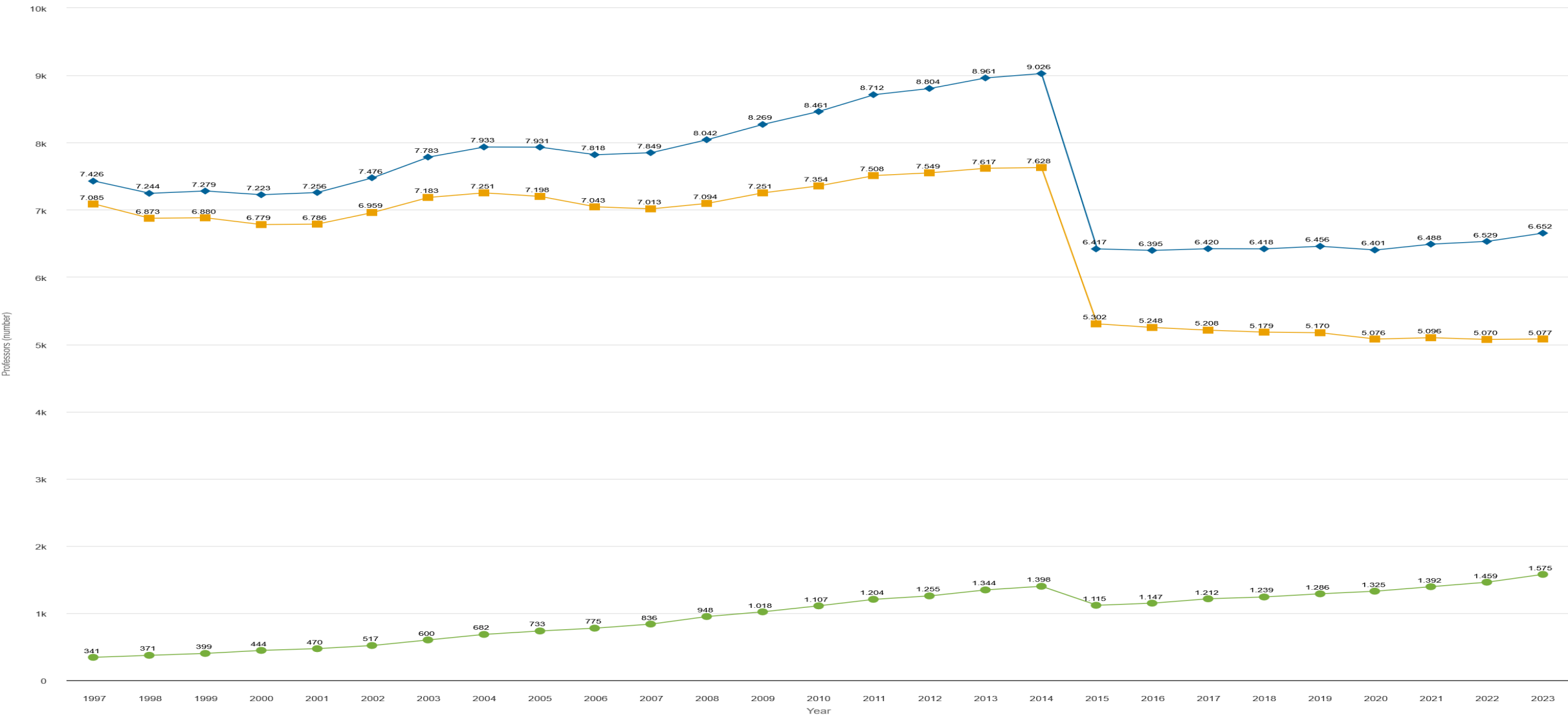
March 25-26th, 2025



● Sex: Female, Subject groups: Total, Statistics: Statistics of higher education staff, Germany: Germany
 ◆ Sex: Total, Subject groups: Total, Statistics: Statistics of higher education staff, Germany: Germany
 ■ Sex: Male, Subject groups: Total, Statistics: Statistics of higher education staff, Germany: Germany

Professors in Mathematics and Natural Sciences, 1997-2023

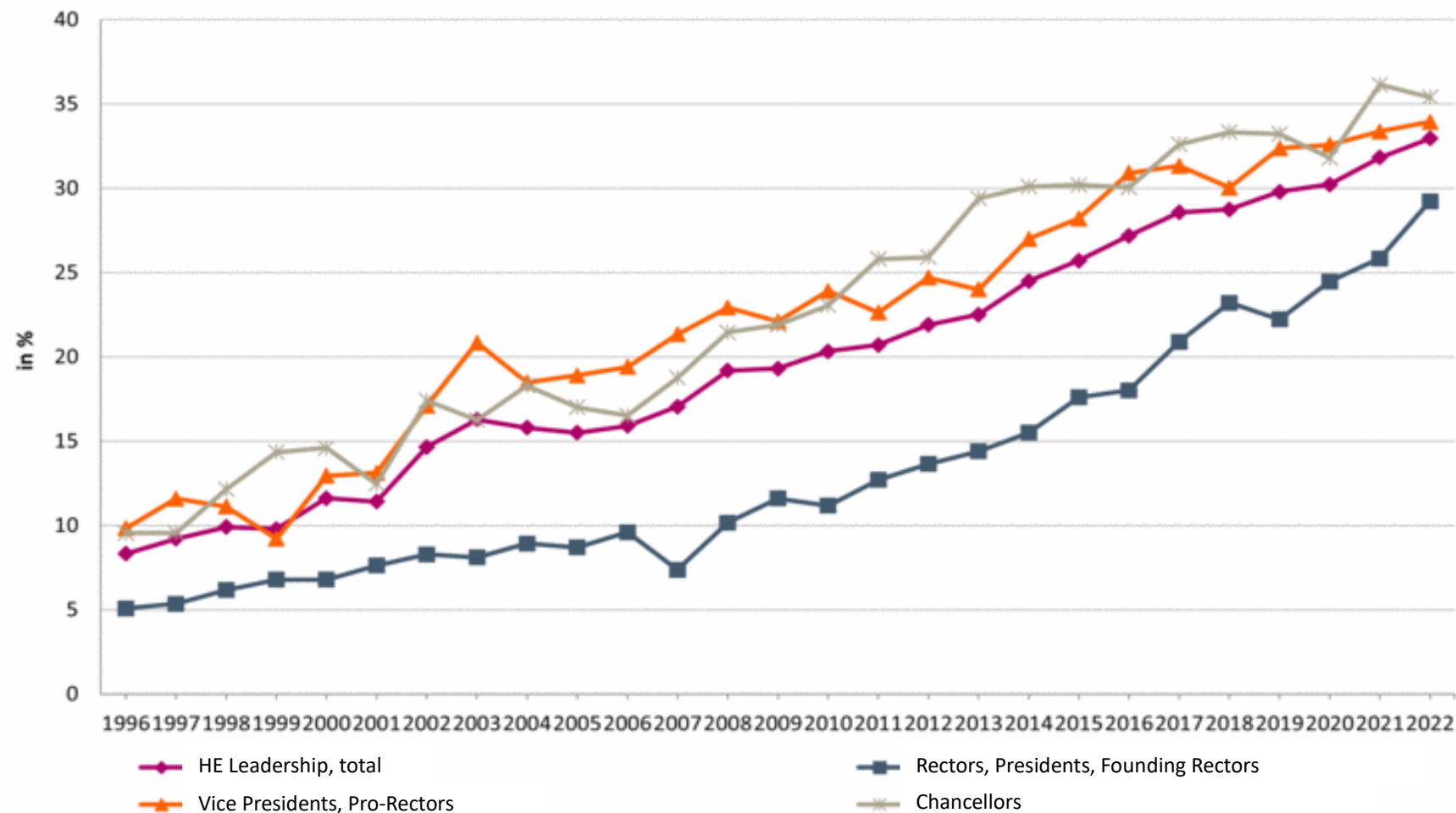
March 25-26th, 2025



● Sex: Female, Subject groups: Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Statistics: Statistics of higher education staff, Germany: Germany
 ◆ Sex: Total, Subject groups: Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Statistics: Statistics of higher education staff, Germany: Germany
 ■ Sex: Male, Subject groups: Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Statistics: Statistics of higher education staff, Germany: Germany



Share of Women in HE Leadership, 1996-2022



Diversity: Achievements

- Some Higher Education Acts of the Federal States (i.e. Berlin), have included diversity and stipulate the appointment of diversity officers.
- Difficult to measure the degree of diversity due to lack of data.
- In the last decade universities were busy with developing diversity strategies and anti-discrimination rules and procedures in order to create an inclusive environment.
- Institutional structures have been implemented, such as Diversity and Antidiscrimination Offices, as for the case of FUB, for instance, at the management level (Stabstelle).

Defining 'Diversity'

- **Macro level (Who are we?)**
 - Self-image and identity of the university
 - Mission statement, guidelines and rules
- **Meso-level (Inclusion & Equity)**
 - Service and advice centers
 - Complaints offices/anti-discrimination office
 - Training and further education
 - Institutional support and redistribution system
- **Micro level (Belonging)**
 - Unconscious bias and homosocial cooptation
 - Habitus-sensitive approaches in teaching

Current Challenges

- There is a great variance in the ways in which diversity is being implemented:
 - In terms of the categories of difference that are included; i.e. the inclusion of personnel with disabilities in compliance with the social security code plays an important role; “*race*”, however, mostly does not play a role.
 - Debates on whether gender is still the “master category”.
 - How diversity is being integrated into the institutional structures: In some universities it is part of the gender equality office (i.e. Goethe Universität Frankfurt); others have created diversity offices at management level

Conclusion: Towards Inclusive Excellence?

- Implementing gender equity and diversity policies does make a difference. It promotes incrementally a more inclusive environment in academia.
- Current political climate against gender equity and diversity policies is highly problematic.
- Discourse on the relationship between inclusion and meritocracy is being instrumentalized.
- How can we foster the resilience of higher education institutions in such a political environment?