

Diversity Policies of the University of Siegen

– Strategy Paper –

Prorectorate for Education



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1. Introduction

The strategy paper *Diversity Policies of the University of Siegen* is based on the core tasks and goals formulated in the University Development Plan 2015. Diversity policies include strategies for democratically constituted organizations as well as the development of participation formats that include all status groups and all areas of the institution. The approach combines bottom-up and top-down elements to bring about sustainable structural changes. The goal is to empower underrepresented groups and develop a discrimination-free university. Compensating for disadvantages or difficulties in order to achieve equal opportunities in no way implies a loss of quality or level, nor does it represent a preference for certain marginalized groups of people.

As part of the Diversity Audit "*Vielfalt gestalten*" (Shaping Diversity) of the "*Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft*"¹, members from all status groups of the university were involved in the strategy development. The present paper was developed in close cooperation between the former Prorektorate for Education and Diversity (*Bildungswege und Diversity*), the project steering group of the Diversity Audit (*Steuerungsgruppe*), the Prorektorate for Education, the Equal Opportunity Office, the Senate Commission for Education and Diversity, the steering committee of the audit (Lenkungskreis), the university management, the faculties and the student representatives. With this paper, the University of Siegen takes into account the diversity of its members in the sense of a self-commitment. At the same time, it serves to further develop the profile of the University of Siegen and supports its successful positioning in higher education competition.

While the terms diversity and variety are used synonymously in this strategy paper and refer to differences and similarities of groups and individuals based on selected dimensions, the term *Diversity* is understood as a concept of appreciative handling of precisely this variety. Diversity policies refer to the overall strategic actions of the University of Siegen with regard to diversity.

Changes in society due to globalization, internationalization, mobility, digitalization, the aging of society, and the diversification of educational paths and types of schools are changing the higher education landscape and presenting the University of Siegen with new challenges. More and more, the university is opening up to groups that were previously underrepresented and is enabling more diverse access to study. Against this background, the University of Siegen's proactive, strategic approach to diversity is becoming increasingly important.

Changes in the legal situation (AGG and UN CRPD) are highly binding in demanding equal opportunities for participation in education, irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, religion and worldview, disability/chronic illness and sexual orientation. Furthermore, the diversity dimension of socio-economic (educational) background is highly relevant for universities. In order to do justice to our increasingly diverse students and employees as well as the diversity of subject cultures and to assert and use this diversity as creative-innovative potential for the entire university, the University of Siegen needs an even more diversity-sensitive profile as a modern and cosmopolitan public institution.

The University of Siegen is aware of its personal obligation, its responsibility to society as a whole and its function as a role model. It therefore strives for equal opportunities and educational equality as well as a barrier- and discrimination-free research, teaching, learning and working environment and thus a culture of appreciation. At the same time, it is particularly sensitive to existing weaknesses and inequalities.

The organizational culture and structure at the University of Siegen is characterized by flat hierarchies, open doors and - despite separate campuses - short communication channels. Already anchored in the university's mission statement are a commitment to diversity and equal opportunities as well as to participation and co-responsibility, and the associated self-commitment to the development of diversity policies.

¹ In February 2020, the University of Siegen was awarded the Diversity Certificate "*Vielfalt gestalten*" by the *Stifterverband* after completing the two-year auditing process. The certificate is valid for three years.

In order to bundle, network and improve the visibility of the many measures for gender equality and diversity, the following was established

- » in 2016, the Prorectorate for "Education and Diversity" was established,
- » the Diversity Charter was signed in 2017, and
- » launched the auditing process "*Vielfalt gestalten*" of the "*Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft*" for comparative and external assessment.
- » Since 2019, the topic of "Diversity" has been directly assigned to the rector, who appoints a person from among the prorectors to carry out the tasks. For the current rectorate period, the "Education" department will assume responsibility for diversity.

Work in the areas of gender equality and compatibility of work/study and family is already very advanced. Based on a firmly established equal opportunities strategy/concept, a wide range of measures has already contributed to equal opportunities for the sexes at the University of Siegen:

- » Since 2006, the University of Siegen has been certified as a family-friendly university.
- » Since 2009, it has received the TOTAL E-QUALITY award every three years for its exemplary equal opportunity-oriented personnel policy.

Since April 2017, the University of Siegen has had a Service Office for Inclusion, which has been working intensively on the development and expansion of services for disabled and chronically ill students and employees and developing an inclusion concept for the university.

After the successful completion of the HRK audit "*Internationalization of Universities*", the University of Siegen adopted its internationalization strategy in May 2019. In addition, the University of Siegen underwent the transfer audit in 2016, which advises and supports universities in the development process and in achieving the goals of a sustainably implemented and lived transfer process.

The University of Siegen also sees itself as a place of lifelong learning (LLL), explicitly addressing the diversity dimension of age. The university's offerings range from the Children's University for children to senior studies in the Wednesday Academy. With the Continuing Education Center, which is currently in the planning stage, the university is expanding its offerings for continuing academic education for working professionals. The Prorectorate for International and Lifelong Learning and the Prorectorate for Regional and Digital Affairs coordinate the existing and planned programs in this area.

So far, diversity policies here have focused primarily on the diversity dimensions of gender, family and disability. In the future, "the entire diversity of social differences should be brought into the focus of the University of Siegen, institutionalized accordingly and reflected appropriately" (University Development Plan 2015, p. 12). This requires not only human and financial resources, but also strategic objectives that are developed in coordination with relevant actors of all status groups at the central and decentralized levels and implemented in a sustainable and professional manner in all central fields of action of the university. The implementation of the strategy and the establishment of diversity policies is thus a cross-sectional task and an important part of the organizational and quality development of the University of Siegen.

2. Vision, mission statement and understanding of terms

Vision

Diversity is a lived culture at the University of Siegen and a natural practice in dealing with each other and in all areas of university management. With regard to diversity, the University of Siegen has permanent structures and clear responsibilities at the university management and operational level, continuously offers information, support and further education, and also publicly acknowledges the diversity of its members.

Mission Statement Diversity: Zukunft menschlich gestalten – Vielfalt erhalten

The University of Siegen understands the diversity of its members as a basis, potential and opportunity for scientific progress. It promotes a university culture of appreciation, openness and tolerance, in which all its members can develop and contribute their individual abilities. The university sees it as its task to contribute to working, studying and living conditions in compliance with social standards, which allow all students, employees and scientists to develop in the best possible way and to assume their responsibilities in the world of work, family and society. All members of the university should be supported in actively contributing to a barrier- and discrimination-free university and thus to the fulfillment of structural equality of opportunity.

By expanding the maxim "*Zukunft menschlich gestalten*", which is anchored in the mission statement of the University of Siegen, with the addition of "*Vielfalt erhalten*" as a guiding principle for our diversity policies, two things are expressed: On the one hand, "*erhalten*" means that we preserve, value and promote the diversity of our students and employees (= maintaining). On the other hand, this guiding principle expresses that the university is also opening up to the outside world in order to become even more diverse, to actively recruit groups that were previously underrepresented, and thus to maintain more diverse students and employees (= increase). On the one hand, this refers to all talented students for whom access to the university has so far been difficult due to individual or structural requirements. On the other hand, it implies the recruitment of excellent scientists and outstanding employees, who should support the University of Siegen with its diverse potentials and talents even more than before.

Understanding variety and Diversity as a concept

The University of Siegen's understanding of diversity is based on the democratic values of equal opportunity, inclusion, participation and anti-discrimination. It is specified by the explicit connection of education and Diversity. The goal is to break down existing barriers and obstacles to accessing education, further education, and qualifications, and to enable different types of access and different educational paths. With or without a high school diploma, on the second or third educational path, or by exploring the possibilities of expanding dual or part-time courses of study: In the future, the University of Siegen will promote even more decidedly the diversity of educational origins and futures, and will draw from the diversity of its members the potential for creativity, innovation and excellence.

Diversity is understood in many ways, for example as variety, difference, heterogeneity or individuality. While we use the terms diversity and variety synonymously and to describe a perceptible reality, we understand Diversity as a concept for the conscious (university-) political, strategic handling of this variety and its appreciative recognition in its differences as well as commonalities. Diversity does not focus on the deficits of individuals or try to find solutions to their supposed problems. Rather, Diversity is about recognizing the diverse achievements and experiences of people and understanding them as potential, promoting them and allowing synergies to emerge. In doing so, an intersectional perspective² is adopted, which takes into account the mutual entanglement and interaction of different diversity dimensions in the context of social and institutional power relations.

The different personal, formal and structural prerequisites with which students, scientists and employees in technology and administration come to the University of Siegen form precisely this diversity of potentials, which we want to maintain and promote. We see diversity explicitly as an opportunity and an advantage for diversity-oriented teaching and individual learning processes, for innovative research in heterogeneous teams and for a third mission that has an impact on the region (cooperation, knowledge transfer to society, further education opportunities and regional commitment).

Within the university, it is important for us to focus on diversity at all levels (study, teaching, research, governance and management, service and university administration), both centrally and decentrally, and to implement and realize measures for dealing with diversity in an equal-opportunity manner in exchange with each other, together and across hierarchical levels. We believe that this is the only way to achieve sustainable, structural changes that benefit all members of the University of Siegen. The central goals of the diversity policies are the reduction of (structural) discrimination and disadvantage (in accordance with the AGG), the promotion and realization of equal opportunities, and the systematic promotion of the potential and talents of all university and organizational members.

In a holistic-systemic approach to diversity, it is a fundamental prerequisite to work multidimensionally and intersectionally. Due to their clarity, the Four Layers of Diversity according to Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003) offer a good, albeit rather static, way of representing diversity dimensions. As at other universities, the transfer of the model to the university context by Leicht-Scholten (2012) was taken as a basis to map the diversity dimensions at the University of Siegen.

² Intersectionality refers to the intersection of discriminatory features in a person. The concept is based on the recognition that social categories such as gender, ethnicity or class cannot be viewed in isolation from one another, but must be analyzed in their "interweavings" or "intersections". For example, a female student may be impaired or disadvantaged in her studies both because of her gender and at the same time because of a mental or physical disability. She may have different experiences than a male student with a disability or a female student without a disability.

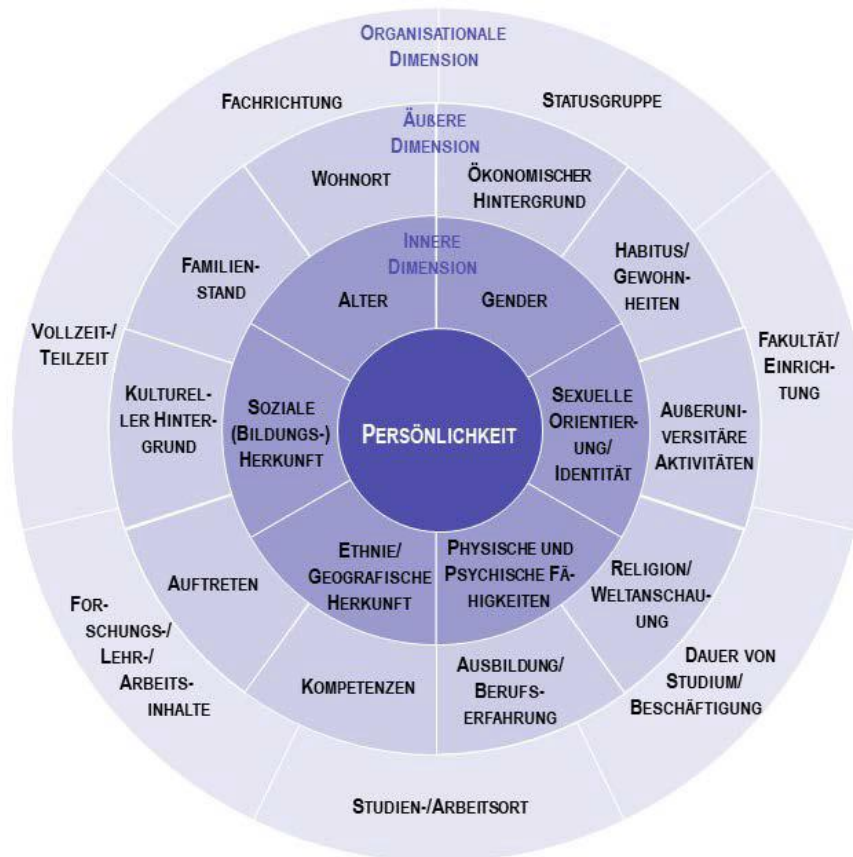


Figure 1: Dimensions of diversity at the University of Siegen

In the course of the strategy development at the beginning of the audit, all mapped dimensions of diversity were examined against the background of existing conditions at the University of Siegen. In a structured process, focal points were set, which are now of special importance in a first phase until the year 2023 without completely losing sight of other dimensions. Four areas were identified to which the University of Siegen already attaches particular importance, which it would like to expand further, or which require a special focus due to the existing student structure.

Currently, the diversity policies of the University of Siegen focus in particular on the following four areas, which are rather person-related and cannot be changed by the individual:

- » Socio-economic (educational) background / first generation students
- » Gender, family and sexual orientation
- » Disability and chronic illness

³ The figure shows dimensions of diversity that are relevant for universities. The inner dimension, which contains the relatively unchangeable characteristics of individuals, is highlighted in dark blue, while the subsequent outer dimension is considered relatively changeable. Finally, this is embedded in an organizational dimension (adapted to the university context), which contains the characteristics that can be changed by the individual.

- » Ethnicity/nationality and migration background.

It goes without saying that diversity policies must take into account not only personal aspects but also behavioral aspects such as attitudes, communication and working styles, and learning behavior and strategies as diversity competencies. These behavioral aspects are also diverse, individually different and do not derive automatically from certain person-related characteristics (cf. De Ridder 2012: Vielfalt gestalten, p. 18). Behavior-related aspects are also taken up and considered within the framework of the strategic goals where this is already possible, but will be focused on more intensively at the latest in a future further development of the strategy. However, the current focus up to 2023 is more on the people-related aspects, as can be seen below.

3. Goals and guiding principles

Strategic goals

With its holistic orientation, the diversity strategy of the University of Siegen aims to change the entire organizational culture. With the strategic orientation and sustainable anchoring of diversity policies at the University of Siegen, we promote, in accordance with the diversity dimensions we focus on (socio-economic (educational) background, gender, family and sexual orientation, disability and chronic illness, ethnicity/nationality and migration background), above all structural development and measures related to:

- » educational justice and equal opportunities
- » gender equality, family-friendliness and compatibility
- » Inclusion and accessibility
- » Internationality and interculturality

Guiding principles

The understanding of diversity anchored in this strategy paper is based on the following guiding principles. In the future, they should all serve to promote an organizational culture in which individual, social and cultural diversity is understood and lived as an enrichment, innovative-creative potential and quality feature.

- » We raise awareness of **equal opportunities** and promote diverse and equitable educational paths for students, continuing education paths for employees and qualifying educational paths for young scientists.
- » We strengthen **flexibility** through appropriate working and study conditions to ensure equal opportunity participation.
- » We enable comprehensive, cross-hierarchical **participation** of all stakeholders of the University of Siegen in diversity policies.
- » We stand up for **anti-discrimination** and focus on the entirety of students and employees in their differences and similarities.
- » We take **intersectionality** into account and consider diversity dimensions in their respective complex interactions and consequences.

- » We create **sustainability** through structural frameworks and regularly review measures for their effectiveness for an efficient use of resources.
- » We promote the **professionalism** of all university members in dealing with diversity.

4. Organization and structural anchoring

At the University of Siegen, the topic of diversity is the direct responsibility of the rector, who appoints a person from among the prorectors to carry out the tasks. For the current rectorate period, the department "Education" is responsible for diversity.

The anchoring of diversity at the level of the university management as well as in the university's mission statement expresses the seriousness of our university's declaration of intent. This places the topic of diversity in the university's constant reflective self-assurance about its mission and about the conditions of its actions. With the mission statement, the university management signals its responsibility for the realization of the diversity policies and for providing the necessary (infra-)structural, human and financial resources. However, it is not sufficient to focus the topic exclusively on the level of the university management. The university management alone can create conducive structures top-down. However, diversity only takes shape in practice and depends on a living bottom-up culture.

In order to further develop and promote a bottom-up culture, to network the respective actors and to make their activities more visible, as well as to continue processes already underway as a result of the audit, a sustainable structural framework with corresponding personnel and financial resources at the operational level is required in close cooperation with already existing structures such as the equal opportunity work and the service office for inclusion. Such a structure with clear responsibilities is responsible for the implementation of the diversity policies as well as the scientifically based coordination, evaluation and further development of strategies and diversity-related offers and measures at the University of Siegen on a central and decentralized level in close coordination with the responsible prorectorate. Through this, equal educational opportunities and a non-discriminatory university culture are strived for. In order to fulfill these tasks, the position of a Diversity Policy Officer was established in March 2020 on a permanent basis to address the topic in the long term. The Diversity Policies Officer is the necessary interface between the university management and the operational level and works closely with the responsible prorectorate, the institutions and facilities in teaching, science and administration with a diversity focus and, in particular, the Equal Opportunities Office and the Service Office for Inclusion on a strategic/conceptual level. The central tasks include: Concept and strategy development, management and leadership of the (regional) Diversity Committee, awareness-raising work, diversity consulting, quality development and assurance, public relations for the areas of diversity, equal opportunities and anti-discrimination, cooperation and networking within the university and externally, as well as knowledge transfer and committee work.

The central instrument in the planning, (further) development and implementation of diversity measures is the Diversity Commission, which will meaningfully merge the former Senate Commission for Education and Diversity and the Diversity Audit Steering Committee and is composed of relevant actors from all status and stakeholder groups and institutions in the field of

diversity, as well as project-related regional players. This body serves to advise the Rectorate, the University Council and the faculties in particular on all matters concerning educational equity and equal opportunities for all members of the university and the recognition of its diversity.

5. Areas of activity (2020-2023)

In the context of the diversity audit, the composition of the steering committee and the topic-specific working groups, which are made up of all status groups of the university, has already succeeded in sensitizing participants in central fields of action of university management to diversity. Within the fields of action, initial goals have been developed and implemented, and further challenges have been identified that need to be addressed in the future. The operational implementation of the goals formulated in the strategy paper is carried out through measures in the fields of action of *strategy and structure, study, teaching and research, inclusion and accessibility, communication and participation, and personnel and organizational development*. In the course of time, further fields of action with corresponding measures will be added. In the future, a detailed catalog of measures as well as central actors can be found in the brochure "*Diversity and Equal Opportunity at the University of Siegen*".

The following overview is not intended to give the impression that the desired cultural change will occur automatically through the achievement of the respective goals. The formulated goals merely serve to operationalize individual steps and necessary prerequisites on the way to a living diversity culture at our university, but they are not to be equated with it.

Strategy and structure

Operational target	Responsibility	Status
Anchoring the commitment to diversity and equal opportunities in the university's mission statement	University Management	done
Preventing structural discrimination mechanisms in all areas of the university	University Management, Human Resources and Legal Department, Faculties, Central Facilities	continuously
Anchoring diversity at the level of university management	University Management, Prorectorate for Education	done
Structural anchoring of diversity policies at operational level	University Management, Prorectorate for Education	done
Transfer of the Senate Commission for Education and Diversity and the Steering Committee into a permanent Diversity Committee with the involvement of regional players	University Management, Prorectorate for Education, Officer for Diversity Policies	planned
Development of an anti-discrimination guideline including a complaints management system	Equal Opportunities Officer, Legal & Human Resources Department, Diversity Policies Officer, Equal Opportunities and Diversity Commission	in progress

Strategy development for the inclusion of the faculties in the diversity policies, e.g. through target agreements / action plans / incentive systems, etc.	Prorectorate for Education, Diversity Policies Officer in cooperation with the faculties	planned
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Study, teaching and research

Operational target	Responsibility	Status
Development of a gender- and diversity-sensitive research, teaching and learning culture	Faculties	in progress (successive)
Increasing the number of students, studying within the standard period of study, reducing drop-out rates through diversity policies	Prorectorate for Education in cooperation with relevant support offices, Diversity Policies Officer	continuously
Inclusion of gender and diversity studies content in the development of study programmes	Faculties, QZS, Vice-Rectorate for Education, Gender- und Diversity-Consulting	planned
Gender- and diversity-sensitive design of the structures of study programmes	Faculties, Gestu_S	continuously
Enabling students to responsibly transfer diversity aspects into their later professional environment	Faculties, ZLB, Career Service	continuously
Gender- and diversity-sensitive counselling and services (e.g. ZSB, academic counselling, academic advisor) as well as centrally controlled networking of the counsellors	Faculties, Prorectorate for Education, Service facilities, Diversity Policies Officer	planned
Continuous integration of gender and diversity aspects in research (e.g. in terms of content or through the diverse composition of research teams)	Faculties, gender and diversity consulting by gender-equitable career development officer & diversity policies officer	continuously
Systematic visualisation of research on diversity, equal opportunities and diversity on the Diversity Homepage and continuous review and further development of the concepts	Diversity Policies Officer in cooperation with the faculties / researchers	planned
Ensuring gender- and diversity-appropriate support and promotion of talent in science and research	Faculties, HYT, Equal Opportunities Office (WCS / FraMeS)	continuously

Inclusion and accessibility

Operational target	Responsibility	Status
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Development of an inclusion concept	Service Office for Inclusion, Prorectorate for Education, Diversity Policies Officer	in progress
Extensive awareness-raising and educational work in all areas of the university	Service Office for Inclusion	continuously
Ensuring equal opportunities in the structures of teaching and examinations	Service Office for Inclusion,	in progress
Empowerment and comprehensive participation of disabled and chronically ill students and employees	Service Office for Inclusion, Prorectorate for Education, Diversity Policies Officer	in progress
Networking of disabled and chronically ill students and employees	Service Office for Inclusion, Representative for disabled employees, AStA	planned
Support with various individual requirements and development opportunities	Service Office for Inclusion	in progress
Comprehensive advice and support in granting compensation for disadvantages and hardship applications	Representative for disabled and chronically ill students	in progress
Beratung und Unterstützung von Lehrenden beim Umgang mit Behinderung und chronischer Erkrankung in Lehre und Qualifikation	Service Office for inclusion, ZFH	in progress
Removal of structural and infrastructural barriers and integration into the urban development concept	Building Department, Service Office for Inclusion, interest groups, cooperation with the city and the district	in progress
Removal of barriers on the university's websites	Pressestelle, ZIMT, Servicebüro Inklusion, Referentin für Diversity Policies	planned
Expansion of services for severely disabled and chronically ill employees and doctoral students	Service Office for Inclusion, Representative for disabled employees, HYT, Prorectorate for Education	in progress (for PhD students) planned (for staff)

Communication and participation

Operational target	Responsibility	Status
Greatest possible transparency and enabling participation of all status groups in decision-making processes with regard to diversity	University Management	continuously
Creation of new lines of communication and forms of cooperation	University Management, Prorectorate for Governance, Prorectorate for Education	in progress

Establishment of a diversity-sensitive dialogue and feedback culture	University Management, Human Resources Development, "PE-college", Diversity Policy Officer, Faculties, Central institutions, QZS	continuously
Development of guidelines on gender-sensitive language	Equal Opportunities Office, Executive Department for Press, Communication and Marketing	done
Further development of (university) publicity campaigns	Diversity Policies Officer, Executive Department for Press, all interested members of the university	in progress
Internal and external press and media work	Diversity Policies Officer, Executive Department for Press	continuously
Expansion of external networks and cooperation in the area of diversity & anti-discrimination	Prorectorate for Education, Diversity Policies Officer	in progress

Personnel and organizational development

Operational target	Responsibility	Status
Professionalisation of all employees in dealing with diversity through further training	Personnel development, Equal Opportunities Officer, Prorectorate for education, Diversity Policies Officer, Gestu_S, ZFH, „PE-college“	planned
Sensitisation of teachers for gender and diversity-sensitive (online) teaching	Diversity Policies Officer, ZFH, Service Office for Inclusion, Offices for Equal Opportunities and Family Services, International Office	planned
Reviewing all staff and organisational processes to ensure gender and diversity-sensitive structures	Human Resources Department, Equal Opportunities Officer, Prorectorate for Education, Diversity Policies Officer, COQ	continuously
Ensure personal and professional development of all staff at all levels of qualification	Human Resources Department, Leaders	continuously
Gender- and diversity-sensitive management culture	Human Resources Department, PE College, Equal Opportunities Officer, Officer for Diversity Policies, Prorectorate for Education	continuously

6. Outlook: Quality development and resource assurance

The strategy outlined is intended to establish a culture of appreciation at the University of Siegen and to put anti-discrimination, equal opportunities and diversity into practice. In addition to the creation of structural, personnel and financial conditions by the university management, the fac-

ulties and central institutions contribute their very specific structural and professional competences in order to implement the guiding principle of the diversity policies "*Zukunft menschlich gestalten – Vielfalt erhalten*". In this way, a diversity-sensitive approach is developed throughout the university, which also has an external effect.

The University of Siegen is committed to the challenge of a constant and structured review of the goals set and measures developed. For the continuous improvement, consistent further development, solution of problems and identification of existing challenges of the diversity policies, the following internal and external instruments of quality development and assurance are used after a thorough examination of effectiveness and efficiency:

- » European Quality Audit
- » Appropriate evaluation of individual measures
- » Gender and diversity as aspects of data monitoring at the university
- » Re-audit "Vielfalt gestalten" of the Stifterverband 2023
- » Total E-Quality (including field of action 9 Diversity)
- » Family-friendly university audit

The University of Siegen's diversity policy strategy is characterised by flexibility and openness. It is revised at regular intervals and thus adapted to changing circumstances and needs. In addition, it will in future be interlinked with the many other (sub-)strategies of the University of Siegen (equality, internationalisation, transfer, etc.) in such a way that they interlock and allow an overall strategy to emerge. In this way, the University of Siegen is fulfilling its social responsibility to strengthen participation in science, education and society and to preserve and use diversity to bring about innovative capacity.