

Gender Equality Plan

To promote gender equality at the German Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases

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1 Introduction

A successful gender equality strategy provides tangible benefits. Promotion of gender equality enhances research quality by broadening the available talent pool, supporting diversity in research promotion and countering gender bias – including even its subtler forms – in research focuses and methods. As a result, compliance with key gender-equality and diversity standards now plays an important role in assuring research quality.

2 Scope of application

The gender equality plan will apply for a four-year time period, and it can be revised, as necessary, after it has been in effect for two years. When the current plan expires, a new gender equality plan – with revised and updated objectives and measures – will be prepared.

The gender equality plan applies to all employees of the DZNE. Consequently, it does not apply to grant recipients, unsalaried visiting personnel and temporary staff.

3 Current data from monitoring

The DZNE has worked especially hard to ensure equal opportunity for all employees, regardless of gender. This claim is supported by the following figures:

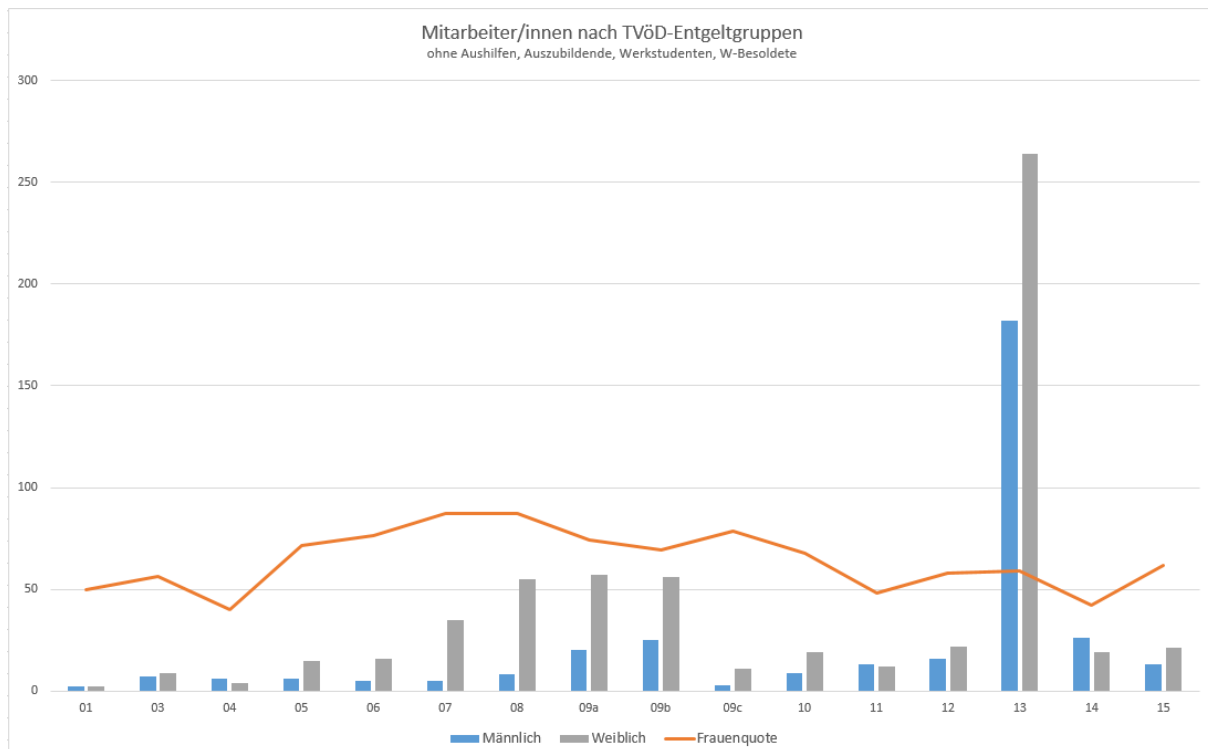
- As of 30 September 2021, a total of 59.3% of the DZNE's employees were women. Among its scientific staff, the corresponding figure was 49.6%.
- Women occupy a full 70.8% of all management positions in the organization's administration.
- In the DZNE's science area, 27% of all W3 positions, 25% of all W2 positions and 33% of all other management positions are held by women.

In comparison to other Helmholtz Association Centers, the DZNE already has above-average percentages of women throughout the various qualification levels. Women already account for considerably more than 50% of some groups of doctoral candidates, for example.

In consideration of candidates for positions, on all hierarchical levels, the DZNE plans to continue to uphold its successful self-imposed standards with respect to both a) achievement of gender equality and b) criteria for individual scientific excellence. Since April 2019, in keeping with this orientation, the DZNE has hired a total of five women as new Young Investigator Group leaders, for a total of seven new Young Investigator Groups. Currently, eight of the organization's 12 YIG-leader positions are held by women.

Taking stock of the DZNE's personnel structures

As of the key date 30 September 2021, the DZNE's workforce included 963 employees in the salary classes EG1 – EG15 (does not include temporary employees, trainees, student trainees and employees in "W" salary classes). Of that number, 617 were women, which is equivalent to a female-employee percentage of 64.1 %. The following figure shows the numbers of women and men in the various salary classes, as well as the female-employee percentage in each salary class.



[Employees by salary classes in the German civil service collective agreement (TVöD); not including temporary employees, trainees, student trainees and employees in "W" salary classes; male, female, proportion of women]

4 Hiring

4.1 Job postings

As a rule, job postings – including both internal and external postings – are written in gender-neutral and inclusive language. This has the purpose of ensuring that all potential candidates feel encouraged, to the same degree, to submit an application.

Also, the organization's online application platform, which significantly reduces recruiting overhead, makes the application process especially fast and easy, for all potential candidates.

The organization's gender-equality commissioner(s), and its representative(s) of persons with severe disabilities, have access to all job postings.

4.2 Job interviews (recruiting process)

In each case, the selection criteria are defined by the requirements for the position to be filled, in terms of suitability, academic/professional performance, qualifications and social competence. Questions regarding marital status, existing or planned pregnancies, and family / caregiving duties are not permitted in job interviews and selection procedures.

4.3 Qualifications of applicants

An applicant's qualifications are determined in light of the requirements profile for the position to be filled. Pursuant to Art. 9 (2) Nos. 1-3 Federal Act on Gender Equality (BGleIG), the following criteria must not enter into comparative assessment of candidates:

1. The following types of results of performance of family or caregiving duties:
 - a) Career interruptions;
 - b) Reductions in years of active service or employment;
 - c) Reductions of working time, or delays in proceeding to specific training courses/programs;
 - d) Demands on time;
2. The income situation of the candidate's spouse or life partner;
3. The candidate's intention to avail themselves of options for reducing their working time, or for taking a period of leave, in order to perform family or caregiving duties.

5 Catalogue of measures

At the DZNE, women are underrepresented in those STEM professions that are of particular relevance for the DZNE. The DZNE is reviewing a catalogue of measures to eliminate this underrepresentation, and it plans to participate in similar measures at the level of the Helmholtz Association.

Such measures have the purpose of increasing the numbers of women in management positions. Via a voluntary commitment, tied to the catalogue of measures, the DZNE is aiming to create a framework that ensures that all employees retain their access to the workplace. For example, family-friendly options are to be made available to employees on an unconditional basis, to ensure that all employees can focus on the organization's operational requirements and concerns during their working time.

The objectives of this gender equality plan are as follows:

1. To reduce any underrepresentation of women (and men) in all areas, especially in management positions;
2. To enhance the organization's attractiveness in recruitment of new personnel, especially younger staff;
3. To help employees achieve a good work / life balance.



5.1 General measures

In each area of the organization, it is up to the manager of the area to take responsibility for increasing the numbers of an underrepresented gender within the area.

The DZNE encourages the participation of women in committees. This means for example that selection committees, which can be formed as part of the application process should be gender balanced. If this is not possible in an individual case for good reasons, these reasons must be put on record.

In accordance with the requirements of the General Equal Treatment Act, DZNE contributes to prevent discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. The DZNE points out its employees that in case of violations consequences under labor law are to be expected. Here the DZNE can issue transfers, warnings and terminations. In addition, the affected employee, who is a victim of harassment, for example, may have the right to refuse performance while continuing to receive payment of remuneration. Additionally, there is a central complaints office at the DZNE, which all employees can contact if they feel discriminated against on the grounds of gender.

The DZNE has also established the position of an Equal Opportunities Officer and her deputy, who are elected by the female workforce. Among other things, they are involved in organizational and personnel measures and are also responsible for advising and supporting the employees.

The DZNE endeavors to include gender equality in its research projects, but must also focus on its scientific research mandate. Therefore, this can be ruled out in particular for projects that are geared towards a specific gender or where only a small number of participants can be assumed.

Also, gender-sensitive language is used in all of our documents and forms.

5.2 Measures to help employees achieve a good work / life balance

5.2.1 Childcare

The DZNE is too small, as an organization, to be able to set up childcare services and facilities in any cost-effective way. But for parents who are unable to obtain a kindergarten place for their children in a daycare center, the DZNE provides support by facilitating contacts to, and sharing the cost of, pertinent private-provider services (especially in the case of parents with children younger than 3 years of age, or in the case of employees who join the organization after the deadline for kindergarten registration has already passed). The private provider in question provides assistance in connection with childcare, home care, eldercare and life-situation coaching. It also offers emergency childcare services and nursing-care services for family members.

Since the DZNE's move into its new facility in Bonn, employees' daycare needs at the DZNE's Bonn site are being met via a cooperative arrangement with the Bonn university hospital (Universitätsklinik Bonn) and its daycare center. Also, the DZNE's other sites have been surveyed with regard to pertinent requirements, and a review will soon be carried out to determine whether cooperative arrangements with suitable daycare facilities can be entered into for those sites as well.



It should also be noted that parent-child rooms are available at the DZNE's Bonn and Tübingen sites.

5.2.3 Welcome Office

By providing proactive support in finding suitable daycare and schools for their children, the DZNE's Welcome Office helps to ensure that the organization's women and men achieve a good work / life balance.

5.2.4 Working conditions

Flexible work, and part-time work

The DZNE's efforts on behalf of a good work / life balance for its employees include the introduction of a works agreement, for the Bonn site, on flexibilisation of working hours and on location-independent working. Plans call for review to determine whether the works agreement can also be applied at the DZNE's other sites.

The options detailed in the works agreement are available to both managerial and non-managerial staff. Employees also have the option of working part-time.

Contract extensions

The options set forth in the Act on fixed-term contracts in academia (WissZeitVG) are to be made available for contract extensions of scientific research staff, including extensions due to maternity leave, parental leave and caregiving leave.

Childcare in connection with conferences and training programs

A procedure has been introduced for reimbursement of costs for childcare, and of costs for nursing care for family members, incurred in connection with business travel and training courses. The procedure provides for subsidization, under certain circumstances, of costs incurred in addition to regular costs for childcare or nursing care. Pertinent information and application forms are available on the intranet.

Measures oriented to specific life phases

A cooperation agreement between the DZNE and the firm pme Familienservice has been in place since 1 January 2020. In addition to covering counseling on the areas of childcare, home care and eldercare, the agreement provides for counseling services with regard to life-situation coaching. As a result, professional counseling is now available to DZNE employees in connection with a range of "work-life-balance" topics.

5.3 Development of the Dual Career network

In the course of their careers, researchers face enormous demands on their flexibility and mobility. Also, the numbers of "dual career couples," i.e. couples in which both partners each pursue a career of their own, continue to grow. Increasingly, when considering career-related relocations, people in such relationships base their decisions on whether their partner will also be able to find desirable career options at the new location.



The DZNE is a member of the Dual Career Network Rhineland, which supports life partners of researchers in finding career options in the Rhineland. The DZNE's Human Resources Department carries out the organization's active work within the Network.

The Dual Career Network Rhineland's member universities and research institutions all share the goal of attracting excellent scientists and researchers to the Rhineland region by offering outstanding working conditions and, for dual career couples, attractive options for achieving a good work / life balance. This is why the Network's Dual Career Service assists researchers' partners in finding acceptable new career options in the Rhineland, in addition to supporting excellent researchers (including newly appointed personnel) in their own professional development. The Dual Career Network Rhineland can potentially identify additional options for specific qualification profiles. While the Network can offer no guarantees of success in finding suitable positions, the close cooperation prevailing between the Network's members enhances supported researchers' chances of success.

5.4 Measures for career guidance

As part of its efforts in the area of career guidance, the DZNE regularly participates in Girls' Day and Boys' Day events.

5.5 General measures for human resources development

Gender equality standards are observed in all measures for human resources development. In such measures, this includes aiming for gender balance among participants, trainers, speakers and other contributors and players. Consequently, the organization's policies call for promoting participation of women in areas in which otherwise, due to structural reasons, they would be underrepresented. The measures for such promotion including actively reaching out to women, and focusing on issues and topics of special relevance for women. This policy is being followed in all areas of human resources development.

5.5.1 Young Investigator Groups programs

The Helmholtz Association's Young Investigator Groups program offers postdocs funding for the purpose of leading a Young Investigator Group for the first time. Support is available for five years (with the option of an extension to a total of seven years, subject to a positive interim evaluation). By leading such a group, young researchers develop their own scientific independence, and obtain a large measure of visibility within the scientific community, at early stages in their careers. Applications from women are encouraged, via measures that include actively reaching out to potential female candidates. Following a positive evaluation, the term limits on YIG leader positions can be waived, an option that promotes gender equality by providing a long-term planning basis for group leaders and facilitating their work / life balance.

The DZNE also offers Career Development Fellowships, an internal career path for outstanding postdocs. Fellows lead a group for five years, subject to the condition that they are able to build



the group via third-party funding. This program also promotes' researchers' independence and visibility, and also offers them a reliable planning basis.

5.5.2 Helmholtz Management Academy

The Helmholtz Management Academy's programs cover relevant areas such as preparation for a leadership role, leading a team effectively, and aligning a group strategically, and they are oriented to managers/leaders in all areas (science, research support and administration/infrastructure). In selecting participants via internal procedures, the Center makes every effort to ensure that both women and men view the programs as career-development options worthy of consideration. Selection decisions are made by the DZNE's Executive Board.

5.5.3 Enhancing gender competence on the part of managers and all staff

The DZNE conducts internal events designed to highlight the special challenges faced by women (but not only women) in the science sector and, thereby, to raise awareness, on the part of managers and all other staff, about gender equality issues. In 2021, for example, the DZNE held a discussion entitled "The Glass Ceiling in Science: Breaking down Barriers Together." The event, which was very well attended, led to a number of additional, related events.

5.5.4 Career Center programs, and development of junior researchers

The DZNE's Career Center, which was established in 2020, promotes the development of junior researchers via workshops, online seminars and eLearning courses. Its specific offerings to date in support of gender equality have included workshops on the topics "Female Leadership" and "Unconscious Bias." Additional such events, with a focus on raising awareness about gender equality issues, are planned.

In all relevant events, such as podium discussions and "career talks" (in which holders of positions, in various areas, discuss their positions and the pathways that led to them), every effort is made to ensure that men and women are equally represented. This policy helps raise awareness about gender equality issues, and it generates opportunities to highlight role models for women.

In the framework of the "Excellence in Science" funding program, selected postdocs aiming for a leadership position in the academic world undertake a special career-development program that supports them on their pathway to a professorship or a comparable leading role in science. In this program as well, every effort is made to ensure gender balance – among participants and, especially, among mentors and exchange partners.

6 Reporting

In strategy-development processes involving the Executive Board and the organization's managers, all participants are called on to observe the gender equality plan's key criteria and integrate them within their work. Furthermore, statistical evaluations should support breakdowns by gender.



7 Bibliography

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