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# EQUALIST

Gender Equality in Information Sciences and Technology

## Gender Equality Progress Report

University of Munster  
(Germany)



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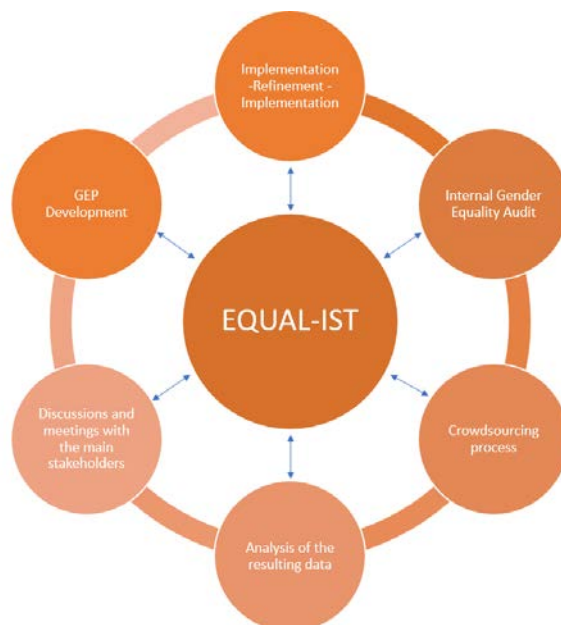
**Keywords:** EQUAL-IST, WWU, Department of Information Systems at the University of Muenster, STEM, women in ICT, Gender Equality Plan, progress report.

### The EQUAL-IST Project

Women remain a minority among academic leaders, especially in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. The project “Gender Equality Plans for Information Sciences and Technology Research Institutions” (EQUAL-IST) is improving this situation for six partner universities that are active in the Information Sciences and Technology (IST) fields (research performing organisations, RPOs). EQUAL-IST joins the forces of the participating RPOs, which are committed to introducing the internal structural changes necessary for boosting gender equality and removing barriers to the career progression of women in Research and Innovation.

The EQUAL-IST project not only boosts gender equality at the involved RPOs, but also seeks to influence a more significant number of IST research organisations in order to address gender bias and contribute to the achievement of ERA objectives by increasing the number of female researchers in the IST fields.

### Case of WWU



The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) developed for the Department of Information Systems (DIS) at the University of Muenster (WWU) is the result of a thorough and rigorous process of internal discussions and analysis. The formulated plan is based on the results of an internal gender audit, a “bottom-up” idea crowdsourcing process supported by the [CrowdEquality](#) platform, discussions with the WWU Working Group members of the EQUAL-IST project, and meetings with the other stakeholders involved in the GEP implementation (e.g., the DIS study

coordinator, representatives of the IS student council, and representatives of the WWU Equal Opportunities Office). As a result, the challenges related to gender equality, diversity, and work-family balance (‘challenges’) were identified and the action plan to address them was developed and approved. The GEP was revised based on the outcomes of the 1st iteration of the GEP implementation (October 2017 – May 2018) and the feedback from the external evaluator of the EQUAL-IST project.

The WWU GEP, as all GEPs developed within the EQUAL-IST project, is aligned with the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.



## Challenges

During the internal gender audit, it was revealed that the root problem for the under-representation of women at the DIS is the low share of young women among IS Bachelor students, namely 13.2% in 2017 (Challenge 1). The issue of the lack of women at higher academic levels at the DIS (professors, doctoral and postdoctoral researchers) is a consequence thereof. Therefore, addressing this challenge forms the GEP focus and corresponds to five actions.

The second priority is to address the attitudinal challenges (Challenge 2 – Challenge 4) related to the overall lack of interest and even hostility towards the topic of gender equality that could be observed during the internal gender audit. Therefore, three actions specifically deal with changing such negative attitudes.

The third priority is to address the challenge admitted by many international students that they felt excluded by local students from group work (Challenge 5). The inclusion of international students is crucial for achieving overall equality and diversity at the DIS. Therefore, the development and implementation of a strategy for connecting international students with local students are required.

Difficulties in balancing work and family life (Challenge 6) were highlighted rarely and mostly dealt with the miscommunication of the expectations from academic staff members during the hiring process. Potential other difficulties faced by the DIS staff members and IS students who have children still need to be investigated, as these groups were not specifically targeted during the internal gender audit.

Vertical gender segregation (Challenge 7) could be observed at the DIS in 2017 only when moving from doctoral researchers (24% are women) to postdoctoral researchers (12% are women). The share of women among full professors at the DIS (1 out of 6, 16.7%) corresponds with the shares of postdoctoral researchers and female IS Bachelor students (13.2%). In the IS Master study programme the share of women is higher (25%) due to the higher share of women among international students. A relatively high share of women among doctoral researchers at the DIS (24%) can be explained by favourable working conditions and multidisciplinary projects, which attract women with non-IS backgrounds to join the DIS. The challenge of vertical gender segregation is of the last priority in the GEP also because the WWU Equal Opportunities Office has already implemented several interventions aimed at advancing women in their academic careers. These interventions include the networking and coaching of female professors, the [“Erstklassig”](#) mentoring programme and [“Frauen managen Hochschule”](#) leadership programme for female postdoctoral researchers, as well as the opportunities for female researchers at all levels to receive funding for individual projects or for covering travel expenses to conferences to enhance visibility of their research. The results of the internal gender audit showed that there was a lack of awareness about these interventions at the DIS, which needs to be changed.

Two further actions, which are related to the GEP dissemination and sustainability, are relevant for all objectives. Furthermore, all actions contain activities aimed at raising awareness about the importance of gender equality.



## Objectives

The identified challenges and the objectives to address them were classified into the EQUALIST project intervention areas and are summarised in the table below:

Intervention Areas	Challenge Title	Objectives
HR and Management Practices	Challenge 4: Negative attitude (of both men and women) towards existing actions promoting women.	Objective 4: Raise awareness about the goals and content of existing actions promoting women.  Objective 5: Critically analyse existing actions promoting women and propose suggestions for their improvement.
	Challenge 6: Difficulties in balancing work and family life.	Objective 7: Improve work-family balance of academic staff members.
	Challenge 7: Vertical gender segregation.	Objective 8: Improve gender balance at higher academic ranks.
Teaching and services for (potential) students	Challenge 5: Perceived exclusion of international students.	Objective 6: Enhance inclusion of international students.
Institutional Communication	Challenge 1: Low share of young women among Information Systems Bachelor students.	Objective 1: Increase the share of young women among Information Systems Bachelor students.
	Challenge 2: Lack of awareness about the topic of gender equality and interest in it.	Objective 2: Raise awareness about the topic of gender equality and interest in it.
	Challenge 3: Lack of seeing value in gender-sensitive language.	Objective 3: Raise awareness about the value of gender-sensitive language.

## Main Results

14 actions were included in the WWU GEP and 26 activities within 12 of these actions were initiated during the 1st iteration of the GEP implementation. 14 out of the 26 initiated activities were completed, 8 are in progress, and 4 are in preparation.





In the “HR and Management Practices” intervention area the following key activities were initiated. (i) Suggestions for improvement of existing regulations related to gender equality were developed and communicated to the WWU Equal Opportunities Office and the SBE dean (School of Business and Economics at the University of Muenster). (ii) Activities, which are aimed at raising awareness about gender equality aspects of the members of appointment committees for tenured positions at the SBE, were initiated and are continuously being conducted. (iii) Suggestions to adjust the SBE mission statement were proposed and partially approved, so that current version of the SBE mission statement contains “freedom from discrimination, equality and diversity” as its values. (iv) A workshop and several meetings with the DIS academic staff members were organised and conducted, where it was discussed how the hiring process at the DIS could be improved. The focus here was on the identification of the mechanisms to reach potential academic staff members, especially among women, as well as on improving the communication of the expectations from academic staff members during the hiring process. (v) Identification of requirements of the DIS staff members and IS students who have children was initiated.

In the “Teaching and services for (potential) students” intervention area most of the activities were related to the development and implementation of a strategy for connecting international IS students with local IS students. The following key activities were initiated. (i) Gender-disaggregated statistics on the share of international students in the Bachelor and Master IS study programmes at the WWU over the last decade were collected and analysed. (ii) A working group for supporting international IS students was initiated within the IS student council. (iii) A workshop aimed at discussing the ongoing and prospective interventions towards enhancing gender diversity and inclusion of international students in the IS study programme at the WWU was organised and conducted. (iv) A panel was organised and conducted within the “Hochschultag 2017” information day for secondary-school students. The panel was aimed at promoting the IS study programme at the WWU and both male and female IS students participated in it. (v) The “Girls’ Day” event was initiated at the DIS. The event was organised and conducted within the “Girls’ Day 2017” information day for female secondary-school students.

In the “Institutional Communication” intervention area the following key activities were initiated. (i) In order to identify promising activities and communication channels to promote the IS study programme at the WWU, several activities were initiated. First, a review of relevant studies was performed to enhance the understanding of how secondary-school students in Germany and outside Germany, and especially young women, inform themselves about potential study programmes in the STEM fields. Second, a survey was designed and conducted, which was aimed at enhancing understanding how Bachelor and Master IS students at the WWU, and especially female IS students, learned about their study programmes, what information sources they found useful, and what sources, vice versa, needed to be improved and how. Third, a workshop was organised and conducted with the DIS academic staff members, which was aimed at enhancing the understanding of how to make the IS study programme at the WWU attractive for potential students and especially for potential female students. (ii) The brochure promoting the Master IS study programme at the WWU was revised using the gender-sensitive approach and the recommendations for its improvement were suggested and partially implemented. (iii) The opportunities to promote the IS study programme at the WWU at surrounding schools are currently being investigated. (iv) Activities to raise awareness about the importance of gender equality and the value of gender-sensitive language are continuously being conducted within all the other initiated



activities. Moreover, it is being investigated, how the communication of the content of existing interventions promoting women and the reasons behind them could be improved. The main obstacle faced during the 1st iteration of the GEP implementation was the lack of acceptance of the GEP among the DIS academic staff members, which was revealed once the GEP was presented to them. The 'lessons learned' from the initial GEP presentation were considered during the planning and implementation of subsequent activities. Currently, a gradual acceptance of the GEP at the DIS can be observed, but further efforts are required in order to establish the accountability of the DIS professors and staff members to implement the GEP beyond the runtime of the EQUAL-IST project.

## **Involved Stakeholders**

### **EQUAL-IST project leader at the WWU:**

Dr. Elena Gorbacheva - Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS; SBE Equal Opportunities Officer.

**Head of the DIS:** Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dr. h.c. Jörg Becker – Head of the Chair for Information Systems and Information Management.

**SBE dean:** Prof. Dr. Theresia Theurl - Full Professor of Economics and Managing Director of the Institute for Cooperative Research.

**DIS study coordinator:** Dr. Stefan Schellhammer - Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS.

**SBE study coordinator:** Dr. Ulrike Augustin; Staff Member at the SBE Dean's Office.

### **WWU Working Group members of the EQUAL-IST project:**

- Dr. Armin Stein - EQUAL-IST Project Management Board Member; Managing Director of the European Research Center for Information Systems (ERCIS); Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS.
- Dr. Michael Räckers - CEO of the DIS; Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS.
- Dr. Katrin Bergener - Managing Director of the WWU Centre for Europe; Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS.
- Nadine Ogonek - SBE Deputy Equal Opportunities Officer; Member of the SBE Equal Opportunities Commission; Research Assistant at the DIS.
- Bettina Distel - Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS.

- Lisa Julia Pullar - EQUAL-IST WWU Project Assistant.

### **Former WWU Working Group members of the EQUAL-IST project:**

- Janine Tratzki - Former WWU Advisor for Equal Opportunity Affairs.
- Madita Rabe, Annika Lake - Former EQUAL-IST WWU Project Assistants.

### **IS student council:**

- Lars Becker, Paul Knauth - Advisors.
- Liliya Mustafina, Falk Beinker, Human Tavasoli - Coordinators of the mentoring programme at the IS student council.

### **WWU Equal Opportunities Office:**

- PD Dr. Patricia Göbel - WWU Equal Opportunities Officer.
- Britta Ervens - Former WWU Deputy Equal Opportunity Officer for Student Affairs.
- Judith Arnau - WWU Advisor for Equal Opportunity Affairs.

### **"Hochschultag" team:**

- Lena Adam, Oliver Tressler - Speakers at "Hochschultag 2017",
- Ann-Cathrin Mutz, Paul Knauth - Speakers at "Hochschultag 2018",
- Lukas Holling - Organiser of "Hochschultag" events at the SBE; SBE Public Relations; Staff Member at the SBE Dean's Office.

### **"Girls' Day 2018" team:**

- Lena Adam, Oliver Tressler - Speakers at "Girls' Day 2018".
- Station leaders at "Girls' Day 2018":



- Lisa Julia Pullar - EQUAL-IST WWU Project Assistant.
- Bettina Distel - Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS.
- Jan Betzing - Research Assistant at the DIS.
- Dr. Mike Preuß - Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS.
- Dr.-Ing. Christian Grimme - Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS.
- Dr. Nico Clever - Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS.
- Dr. Friedrich Chasin - Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS.
- “WatchTrainer” project seminar team.

- Claudia Cramer - Organiser of “Girls’ Day” events at the WWU; Staff Member of the WWU Equal Opportunities Office.

**DIS Working Group members of the “Digital Me” project:**

- Dr. Katrin Bergener - Managing Director of the WWU Centre for Europe; Postdoctoral Researcher at the DIS.
- Ute Paukstadt - Research Assistant at the DIS.

**Working Group members for the AACSB Business School Accreditation at the SBE:**

- Prof. Dr. Stefan Klein - Manager of the AACSB Business School Accreditation at the SBE; Head of the Interorganisational Systems Group at the DIS.
- Sophie Wohlhage - Manager International Accreditation; Staff Member at the SBE Dean’s Office.

**Contact person at the SBE for pregnant students and students who have children:** Tanja Koch - Staff Member at the SBE Dean’s Office (Deputy: Dr. Elena Gorbacheva in the role of the SBE Equal Opportunities Officer).

