

[sustainable}diversity



Diversity Strategy BOKU University Executive Summary

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Preamble

BOKU University considers diversity to be a central principle for an equitable, inclusive, and sustainable university culture. With **Sustainable Diversity**, it pursues an approach that links diversity with global challenges such as the climate crisis, social justice, and the reduction of inequalities. The aim is to promote participation, break down structural barriers, and create a respectful university culture in which all members of the university can develop their potential.

Sustainable Diversity means anchoring diversity in all areas of the university in the long term — in research, studies, teaching, work culture, and university management — while contributing to the fulfillment of national and international sustainability goals, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). BOKU University promotes diversity within the institution and acts as a social actor externally by shaping transformation, initiating social innovations, and realizing a more equitable, resilient, and forward-looking university culture.

Vision

BOKU University pursues an intersectional understanding of diversity that takes into account various aspects such as socioeconomic background, age, educational biography, cultural experiences, nationality, gender identifications, sexual orientation, disabilities, and care responsibilities. This understanding forms the basis for the strategic core objectives.

The university relies on a systemic approach that links individual challenges with structural conditions and global developments. Diversity is anchored in everyday university life in order to bring about structural change and transform the organizational culture in a sustainable manner. As an educational institution and employer, BOKU University acts as a role model and promotes fair study and working conditions, equal access and advancement opportunities, and the removal of barriers.

Initial situation

In recent years, BOKU University has implemented important measures to promote social justice, gender equality, and inclusion. Nevertheless, structural challenges remain, particularly in terms of access to higher education, academic career mobility, and the participation of underrepresented groups. Students from non-academic households, people with disabilities, women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and people with migration experience continue to face increased barriers.

BOKU University continuously reflects on its institutional processes in order to reduce these inequalities. This responsibility is also anchored in the 2030 Development Plan, which formulates the promotion of a diversity-conscious teaching, research, and organizational culture as a central concern.

Mission

BOKU University's diversity strategy comprises of six strategic core objectives that are intersectionally linked and contribute to the implementation of the SDGs:

1. Equality and anti-discrimination

BOKU University is committed to eliminating structural discrimination and promoting gender equality and social equality of opportunity. The goal is to create a fair and inclusive university culture in which all people have equal opportunities to develop their potential.

Measures include reviewing and adapting recruitment and promotion processes as well as systematically collecting and analyzing diversity data. One focus is on closing the "leaky pipeline" in academia. Through targeted career support, mentoring programs, greater visibility for disadvantaged groups, and the development of diversity skills, BOKU actively promotes equal opportunities for all university members.

2. Accessibility and inclusion

Accessibility in terms of physical, digital, and social accessibility is a basic prerequisite for participation. BOKU University strives for comprehensive inclusion by implementing structural measures, digital accessibility, and low-threshold communication formats, and by expanding counseling services for students and employees with disabilities or chronic illnesses. The representation of employees with disabilities is to be increased through inclusive recruitment processes and skills development.

3. Social inclusion

The goal is to promote equal access to education and support measures for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups, especially students and employees from non-academic households or with a migration background and different nationalities. By improving study and working conditions and providing targeted information, support, and counseling services, BOKU University aims to promote social justice and open up educational pathways in a sustainable manner. The integration of social aspects into governance structures, the adjustment of funding, and the evaluation of diversity-related activities also fall under this goal.

4. Intergenerational equity and cooperation among all BOKU members

BOKU University promotes an inclusive university community in which all university members — regardless of age or career stage — are equally valued and supported. The aim is to reduce age discrimination, strengthen intergenerational cooperation, and foster a sense of belonging among students and staff. Through a better understanding of different life situations, the involvement of students in decision-making processes, generation-conscious personnel development, and transdisciplinary projects, a respectful university culture is created that enables synergies and sustainable solutions.



5. Ethnic diversity and anti-racism

BOKU University actively addresses racism, ethnocentrism, and global power relations and considers this critical reflection to be a central part of its self-image. It is committed to dismantling institutional racism, questioning discriminatory structures, and promoting decolonial and pluralistic perspectives in research, teaching, and university management. To this end, it relies on measures such as awareness training, anti-discrimination curricula, interdisciplinary and decolonial approaches, and reflection on global power relations and their historical continuities. In addition, the university develops programs to support and promote the participation of students and staff with migration backgrounds and different nationalities.

6. Balancing studies, work, and other areas of life

BOKU University promotes the compatibility of studies, career, care obligations, nursing responsibilities, and voluntary work through flexible working time models, family-friendly structures, and targeted support services. A particular focus is placed on supporting people who are returning to their studies or careers after a break, for example due to parental leave, nursing care, or illness. In order to raise awareness of the diversity of life realities and the importance of care work, the university relies on awareness-raising measures and programs to promote understanding and skills. In addition, BOKU integrates care for the environment into its sustainable university culture and combines social and ecological responsibility to create a supportive and resilient community.



Linking core goals with international and national strategies and BOKU guidelines

BOKU University's diversity strategy is closely linked to national and international strategies such as the UN Agenda 2030 with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is based on the objectives of the EU AI Act, the National Strategy for the Social Dimension in Higher Education, and internal university guidelines such as the BOKU Equality and Women's Promotion Plan, the Ethics Charter, the Internationalization and Sustainability Strategy, and the Guide to Decolonization at Universities and Colleges. The six core strategic objectives of the diversity strategy contribute to the achievement of numerous SDGs, including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

By linking diversity with all dimensions of sustainability, BOKU is taking on a pioneering role in promoting a fair, inclusive, and sustainable university culture.

Participatory implementation

Implementation is participatory and covers seven areas of action: studies, teaching, research, human resources, international affairs, communication, and university management. All members of the university are involved in the development and implementation. Transparency, feedback, and continuous reflection ensure the acceptance and effectiveness of the measures.



Implementation and monitoring

The diversity strategy is based on SMART sub-goals and measures for each field of action and is implemented through concrete action plans with clear responsibilities and time frames. Progress in achieving the goals is regularly reviewed using indicators. This monitoring makes it possible to evaluate the effectiveness of individual measures and adjust them if necessary. BOKU University is committed to transparency and publishes progress reports on the implementation of its diversity goals.

This open and participatory approach ensures that measures to implement the diversity strategy remain dynamic and that BOKU University can respond to new challenges.



The diversity strategy was developed in a participatory process based on a draft by the Diversity Steering Group and with the involvement of key stakeholders (such as the Working Group on Equal Treatment Issues, works council members representing general and academic staff, the Ethics Platform, the BOKU University Student Union, the Senate, and the University Council) and was approved by the Rectorate on November 4, 2025.



This link takes you to the Diversity Strategy page.
There you will find further information and the
detailed long version of the strategy.

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