



Gender Equality Plan (GEP) Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient

2022-2025

Preamble

Active promotion of equal opportunities and gender equality is an overarching goal of ZMO and the Leibniz Association. ZMO, a member at the Leibniz Association since January 2017, had elected an Ombudsperson for diversity in April 2018 for two years. During this period, the elected person was also responsible for dealing with issues related to gender equality and harassment. In March 2020, elections for Equal Opportunities Officers took place, as a result of which an Equal Opportunities Committee is now formally operating at the institute. A second Committee was elected in March 2024. The Committee consists of at least two Equal Opportunities Officers (not only women) who are elected from among the senior researchers at the ZMO for a two-year period.

The present plan was drawn up in 2021-22 and originally signed on 26 April 2022. It is the result of extensive discussions among the Equal Opportunities Officers elected in 2020, the Directorate, the Works Council, the Advisory Board and all employees. It was revised in January 2024 to remove the distinction between regular and deputy officers in order to ensure equal status and recognition for all elected officers. This plan is divided into three sections, which cover the main areas of concern. The plan will be valid for four years, from January 2022 to December 2024, with a provision for annual internal evaluation.

I. Sensitization towards gender and diversity principles

In January 2021, the Equal Opportunities Committee at ZMO published the **ZMO-Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality Concept** (https://www.zmo.de/fileadmin/Inhalte/Ueber_uns/Egual_Opportunities_and_Gender_Equality_Concept.pdf).

The Committee worked on this mission document in collaboration with Leibniz-Zentrum für Literatur und Kulturforschung (ZfL) and the Leibniz-Zentrum für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft (ZAS), the two social science and humanities institutes, which come under the administration of Geisteswissenschaftliche Zentren Berlin e.V. (GWZ) along with ZMO. In alignment with the Leibniz Association's focus on achieving and promoting gender equality, the unique composition of ZMO required us to propose a broader understanding of equality and equal conditions at work. This was adopted in

the mission document by reflecting on and including additional parameters as well as social markers of equality and distinction, which could potentially become a source of discrimination and inequalities. They include, but are not necessarily limited to, identity diversity, statuses such as marital, parental, or age-related, sex and gender, and so on.

The formalization of the mission document as the official public statement of ZMO was the first step towards creating a broader awareness on issues of gender and diversity at the workplace. In comparison to other institutes (and the data available for national aggregates), ZMO holds a unique place when it comes to the gender ratio of the workforce, including the presence of female colleagues in decision making positions. By 31 December 2021, the proportion of women working at the centre was 51.22% for academic staff, 54,55% for non-academic staff, and 55,26 % for student assistants. At the extended management level, which includes the Directorate, research coordinators and the heads of the programme areas, their proportion was 62.5% .

(i) Steps taken in 2020-21 / Status Quo

Hiring Document:

Due to the significant growth in the number of fellows in the last few years, as well as because of the high success of the institution in attracting projects based upon diverse external funding options, a need was felt to document a step-wise process related to personnel hiring. These measures were already partly existing in practice but with a dedicated document, which is internally available to all ZMO colleagues, hiring processes have now been streamlined. As recruitment is the key area outlined in several aid-documents that explain the making of the successful Gender Equality Plan, with a formal guideline of hiring available at the centre, we aim to ensure the implementation of a fair combination of professional excellence and gender and diversity principles in recruitment. Towards this end, one member from the Equal Opportunities (EO) Committee and the Works Council (Beriebsrat) each participate as observers in the interviews; they are also involved, when required, in the pre-interview stages of application selection.

Expert involvement:

We realise that sensitization is an on-going process in which experts must be included. The EO Committee has organized seminars and events with experts to create a wider awareness on issues of academic labour, gendered practices, and sexual harassment.

For instance, Miriam Kienesberger from the Leibniz-Institut für Ökologische Raumentwicklung (IOER) spoke on the theme of emotional labour that researchers and academics go through, and the structural shifts in academic institutions, which are becoming increasingly entrepreneurial in their set-up. While some changes definitely pertain to the macro-level of the existing academic landscape (based on demands of extraordinary individual efficiency, performance, success) in which we globally witness a growing precariousness of young academics; the gender-specific experiences of both overt and subtle 'overload' of work was also shared by a number of colleagues based at ZMO.

Formation of varied platforms at ZMO:

Following the audit in October 2020, two new platforms for open discussions have emerged at ZMO: a) Group of International Scholars and b.) Early Career Women's Forum. Both the groups meet regularly and have become useful fora for fellows at ZMO to voice queries, share experiences and organize informative sessions by inviting speakers (topics such as future perspectives for international scholars in the German academic system etc. were discussed in meetings). Further, they serve as informal gatherings for open discussions on topics related to equality, transparency, assimilation, and gendered notions of work. The Equal Opportunities Committee invited representatives from both these newly formed groups as well as representatives from the pre-existing PhD-candidates' group at ZMO to discuss the areas to be covered and addressed by the Gender Equality Plan.

Support to early career researchers:

The workforce at ZMO consists of a well-balanced mix of senior and early career researchers. The Directorate and other decision-making groups and individuals (such as group leaders) are mindful of the growing academic precarity globally as well as nationally within Germany and Europe in which short-term employment has become a norm rather than exception. The centre remains committed to offer, institutionally and informally, support to early career researchers in a number of ways. Dissemination of information about funding opportunities, encouragement to write grant applications, an on-going mentoring programme (https://www.zmo.de/fileadmin/Karriere/Career_guidelines.pdf) are some of the measures adopted to provide support.

(ii) Objectives for the future and concrete steps for achieving them

Some of the concrete objectives that we intend to develop from this discussion are: one, continuously reflecting upon a principled balance between meritocracy and social structural contexts; two, facilitating career trajectories of younger academics; three, to remain sensitive towards the distribution of workload particularly on early career scholars; four, to de-naturalise links between female gender and emotional (academic) care work. Our key objective is to sensitize the colleagues with our gender and equal opportunities approach. It is particularly to do so as an on-going exercise as new members continue to join the centre through various channels of funding.

Planned steps (measures and responsibilities):

- a) Continuous maintenance of the mentoring system; all PhD candidates (compulsorily) and early career researchers (voluntarily) at ZMO have a mentor from among the senior and advanced career colleagues;
- b) Regular supervision meetings of PhDs with their supervisors¹/guides (either group leaders, members of Directorate, or PIs of third-party funded projects);
- c) *Jahresgespräche* (annual appraisal/review interviews): one meeting for every ZMO fellow with the respective PI or Unit leader and a member of the Directorate; both academic and personal well-being, future concrete plans, and life and work at ZMO and outside are openly discussed;
- d) Discussion of work-in-progress of early career researchers in respective project groups; regular presentations of their drafts should take place, which allows them a good feedback session in smaller groups;
- e) Finding ways to have a systematic dissemination of information about jobs and funding available to everyone; this will particularly be useful for non-German scholars as it may take some time for them to know the German academic landscape comprehensively;
- f) To distribute academic and non-academic workload at ZMO equally and fairly across genders; this was primarily the thinking behind appointing a male member in the EO Committee;
- g) To organize two PVs (internal fortnightly meetings) every year on topics of Equal Opportunity; in addition, the EO Committee members will provide updates and information about their work at PVs. This will ensure that the Committee remains accessible and accountable to the larger workforce;
- h) To work closely with the Works Council on different issues, such as dealing with any specific case that requires representation on behalf of the EO Committee; to

¹This is not to be confused with the university supervisors.

participate in the hiring process with the clear intention of observing the procedures that would ensure the fulfilment of gender and diversity principles and non-discrimination; etc.;

i) To organize at least one seminar or training session with an invited expert on issues related to gender equality, diversity representation, sexual harassment, academic work conditions per year; this will be based upon prior discussions with the wider community at the centre.

II. Sexual Harassment Policy

(i) Steps taken 2020-21 /Status Quo

Seminar on Sexual Harassment:

In line with the ongoing discussions within ZMO, and also along with the one that took place with the Advisory Board during the audit in October 2020, in January 2021, the EO Committee organized a seminar with a professional trainer and coach on issues of sexual harassment, mobbing, bullying at the work place, titled 'Sexual Harassment at Work'. Around 15 fellows participated in the session (representation at the level of the Directorate, EO, Works Council, PhD-candidates and Postdoc fellows at ZMO). The session gave fellows concrete information about the legal frameworks (penal code, criminal law) of the state of Berlin within which the topic of sexual harassment is addressed as well as several hotline numbers for seeking confidential counselling outside ZMO. The session led to a highly interactive discussion on what constitutes sexual harassment (its various forms) and which steps may concretely be taken in such circumstances.

In addition to the ombudsperson the EO Committee members are confidential contacts for employees in the event of discrimination based on ethnic origin, gender, religion, belief, disability, age, or sexuality, as well as in case of sexual harassment or bullying at work. They are committed to safeguarding privacy on any sensitive matter in which the approaching person has clearly laid out the limits to which such concerns can be shared either with other members of the EO or with members of the Directorate.

(ii) Objectives for the future and concrete steps for achieving them

Various preliminary rounds of discussions within ZMO and with members of the Advisory Board have taken place towards the objective of formally designing a Sexual

Harassment Policy document. We intend to finalize this document by the end of 2022. The document will showcase, but more importantly, lay down concrete procedures (who to approach, how to lodge a formal complaint, access to remedial measures and so on) to be followed in case of any incident or allegation. The policy document will strive to attain the maximum balance between providing transparent guidelines to all the employees and observing rules of privacy.

Planned steps (measures and responsibilities):

- a) Drafting and finalizing a Sexual Harassment Policy document; this will be drafted by the new EO Committee which will take charge from April 2022;
- b) Organizing seminar/training session once a year internally for ZMO colleagues by inviting experts working in the field or involved practically in dealing with cases of sexual harassment; such sessions will be organized by the EO Committee in consultation with the Works Council, the Directorate and the representatives of various forums;
- c) Integrating gender and histories/studies of gendered discrimination and power asymmetries more into the research themes of the ZMO;
- d) Keeping the larger academic community of ZMO informed about any new legal or policy document that comes from the side of the state.

III. Structural measures supporting work/life balance

Since its beginnings, ZMO has regarded establishing a compatibility between family/personal commitments and work as an important strategic element for the recruitment and retention of highly qualified employees. This includes reducing existing and potential disadvantages, continuous efforts to achieve compatibility between work and life, and a balance between the professional and private requirements of all employees in the scientific, research support, and administrative fields. This applies to employees at all career levels.

ZMO is committed to promoting organizational structures conducive to a family-friendly work environment.

(i) Steps taken in 2020-21/Status Quo

Due to the ongoing situation of the COVID-19 lockdowns since early 2020, which has required most fellows at ZMO to work from home, several colleagues have been faced with the challenge of managing work/family-life balance. This has particularly impacted colleagues who needed to take care of children (with the closing of day-care centres and schools), elderly family members needing care (organization of care for elderly family members during lockdowns) or family members with prolonged medical conditions demanding special care.

The EO Committee devised ways, in consultation with the Directorate at ZMO and GWZ, to provide some help (for instance, monetary) to single parents, and others for whom balancing academic work and child care had become extremely demanding.

Contract prolongation and maternity leave issues were also raised and resolved to the best of the available resources.

(ii) Objectives for the future and concrete steps for achieving them

Developing concrete guidelines for 'work/family-life balance' to also include issues that some colleagues face in organizing care and providing support to family members, particularly elderly family members, and to partners with medical conditions. A high number of colleagues have their families in other parts of the world, which necessitates regular virtual long-distance presence but also makes such constant connection particularly challenging due to time-zone differences. This therefore requires widening our understanding of 'care-work' to include not only child care but also care-work done towards other family members, elderly and sick, disabled family members, through physical or virtual mediums. The impact of such work towards field-work and archival research needs to be factored in while evaluating academic progress. Many of the colleagues have families in the country of their research and fieldwork, a visit to which becomes unavoidable due to familial or care-provision reasons.

In the similar vein, rules and privileges available in case of maternity, sickness, forms of disability, etc. should be clearly accessible to every member at the centre. Towards these ends, we plan the following measures to be put in practice in the following years:

Planned steps (measures and responsibilities):

a) Organizing an information tool-kit, which will be part of the ZMO Welcome Kit for all fellows. The tool-kit will include guidelines, suggestions and information related to maternity and parental leave (basic information about whom to approach in GWZ when becoming a parent, how to inform oneself about maternity leave (Mutterschutz) before and after giving birth for female colleagues, how and where to apply for parental leave (Elternzeit) and parental benefits (Elterngeld) in the city of Berlin, how and where to apply for funds for child-support (Kindergeld) upon the birth of the child. The EO Committee will organize a specific information kit, based on the already existing brochure of the Senat of Berlin

(<https://www.berlin.de/lb/intmig/veroeffentlichungen/willkommen-in-berlin/>) and on intensive

discussion with other groups at ZMO such as of women and PhDs;

b) Organizing information and providing support when necessary for example with translations, particularly to new international fellows on processes of municipal registration, registration at the Immigration Office (Ausländerbehörde), and similar early bureaucratic requirements. The EO Committee will organize this, particularly in discussion with other groups at ZMO such as of internationals and PhDs;

c) General overview of the list of day-care centres, schools etc. (particularly any links to information in English for non-German speakers);

d) Using the PV as a forum for bringing up any issues of general interest to the wider academic community of the ZMO; encouraging colleagues to speak with the EO Committee in specific cases where privacy is preferred;

e) ZMO offers its employees flexible working hours and the opportunity to work from home or other relevant locations, as and when required and justified. When planning meetings and events, family issues and school holidays are to be taken into consideration; such decisions, upon request, are arrived in consultation with members from the EO, WC, and the Directorate;

f) In the case of important dates outside of regular childcare hours, funds to cover childcare can be applied for; they can also be applied for in case of participation in conferences and further training measures; the Directorate takes that decision in cooperation with the EO Committee and GWZ; depending on the availability of funds and the legal frameworks for spending them.

g) In order to ensure the care of children, ZMO may in special cases try to support parents in finding a place in a day-care centre. On specific necessary occasions, ZMO aims to arrange for impromptu parent-child rooms using vacant offices; the Directorate takes such a decision in cooperation with the EO Committee and GWZ;

h) In exceptional individual cases, and contingent on costs, and the availability of eligible funds, travel expense subsidies can also be applied for to cover the extra costs of children and a caregiver. With their consent, the institute maintains close contact with employees on parental or care leave and, upon their return, offers flexible work schedules which are mutually agreed upon; the Directorate takes that decision in cooperation with the EO Committee and GWZ;

i) ZMO advises applicants for third-party funded projects to also apply for a contract extension in case of maternity or parental leave. In cases where the third-party funding provider does not allow for this option, or no agreement has been reached between the funding provider and the applicant beforehand, ZMO will explore, without any commitment, possibilities to extend employment contracts.

j) In order to further strengthen this line of commitment, ZMO, as a small institute with its own internal mechanisms for ensuring a good work/life balance, will continue to weigh the pros and cons of applying for certificates such as Total E-Quality or 'Work and Family' (*Berufundfamilie*).

Signatures

for the Directorate



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