



Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

2026-2029

Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient

1. Preamble

The active promotion of gender equality is an overarching goal of the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient. ZMO actively works to establish equal opportunities for all employees and to prevent all forms of discrimination in the workplace, including those related to gender, age, race, nationality, religion, sexuality and physical ability.

Equal opportunities and gender equality initiatives at ZMO are guided by the following laws:

- Grundgesetz, Art. 3, Para. 3 (Constitution – Federal Government of Germany)
- Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz (General Equal Treatment Act – Federal Government of Germany)
- Berliner Antidiskriminierungsgesetz (Anti-Discrimination Law – State Government of Berlin)
- Landesgleichstellungsgesetz LGG Berlin (Equal Opportunities Act – State Government of Berlin)
- Ausführungsvereinbarung Gleichstellung AVGlei (Agreement on Equality Between Women and Men in Joint Research Funding - Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz)

2. Equal Opportunities Committee

In accordance with the above laws, ZMO established an Equal Opportunities Committee in March 2020. The composition of the Equal Opportunities Committee and the tasks of its constituent Equal Opportunities Officers are laid out in ZMO's 'Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality Concept.' This document is published on ZMO's website.

The Equal Opportunities Committee should be comprised of two Equal Opportunities Officers, though it can be comprised of a single officer if circumstances necessitate it. Equal Opportunities Officers are elected in a secret ballot by the staff of ZMO. Each Equal Opportunities Officer serves a two-year term, with the possibility of re-election. If an election is not possible, these positions can be filled by direct appointment by the Directorate and the heads of programme areas.

The Equal Opportunities Officers serve as:

- the decisive point of contact for both the administration and employees in questions related to equal opportunities and gender equality
- the confidential advocate for employees in the event of discrimination
- the outside observer of hiring practices to ensure non-discrimination

In keeping with the legal basis for gender equity initiatives at ZMO, the Equal Opportunities Officers themselves have the authority to determine their own portfolio. They can determine when administrative procedures (i.e. budgeting, scheduling, etc.) result in or can result in discrimination. In such instances, the Equal Opportunities Officers can demand that they be included as observers in meetings, allowed the opportunity to comment on pending issues, and be notified of changes to procedures.

Elections for Equal Opportunities Officers are planned for April 2026 and April 2028.

3. Equal Opportunities Committee Budget

ZMO recognizes that the promotion of equal opportunities and gender equality requires the investment of time, money and other resources. Since 2023, ZMO has included the Equal Opportunities Committee as its own line item in the administrative budget. Since 2025, the Equal Opportunities Committee has had complete control over this budget, which it can use for training and seminars, as well as to cover certain staff needs such as childcare. The conditions under which these funds can be used have been agreed upon with the administration of GWZ and are laid out in a Maßnahmenkatalog that will be posted to the ZMO website.

Through 2029, ZMO will continue to grant the Equal Opportunities Committee an annual budget of at least €1000 per year.

4. Data Collection

ZMO is committed to continuing to collect data to ensure that there is gender parity in the workforce. For years, this data has been collected annually and published in ZMO's annual report. Since 2022, this data has informed equal opportunities and gender equality initiatives at ZMO, as outlined in the 2022-2025 Gender Equality Plan.

The most recent data shows that ZMO holds a unique place relative to other research institutions when it comes to the gender ratio of the workforce. In 2025, women accounted for 46% of scientific staff, 38% of non-scientific staff, and 46% of student assistants at the centre. In the extended management level, which includes the directorate, research coordination, and the heads of the programme areas, the proportion was 60%.

Based on this data, the Equal Opportunities Committee and ZMO Directorate have agreed that gender equity initiatives for the period 2026 to 2029 will focus on:

- Gender equity and equal opportunities in hiring
- Providing evidence-based anti-discrimination training for the whole organization
- Fostering work-life balance that creates an inclusive environment
- Integration of sex/gender into research priorities
- Combating gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

5. Hiring

ZMO has a stepwise process for personnel hiring. This process was put in place because ZMO has experienced both: 1) a significant growth in the number of fellows joining the centre each year; and, 2) a high success rate in attracting externally funded projects. This process is laid out in a Hiring Document, which is available to all ZMO colleagues. By formalizing the process, ZMO has limited the opportunities for discrimination in the recruitment of new employees.

Through 2029, the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion will continue to be followed at every stage of the hiring process. ZMO will continue to require that an equal opportunities and gender equality statement be included in all job advertisements. In addition, the Equal Opportunities Committee will continue to be invited to observe the pre-interview stages of application selection and the job interviews.

6. Anti-Discrimination Training

Ensuring equal opportunities and gender equality is an ongoing and long-term process that necessitates the sensitization of colleagues at every level. This process requires the training of both staff and decision makers.

The Equal Opportunities Committee has assumed the responsibility for organizing anti-discrimination trainings. These trainings have been and will continue to be organized in close collaboration with the Works Council (Betriebsrat).

Through 2029, the Equal Opportunities Committee plans to:

- Organize at least one training session per year during a PV (Projektversammlung, i.e., centre-wide bimonthly internal meetings that are mandatory for all research staff)
- Provide updates throughout the year at other PVs in order to inform the staff about the committee's ongoing work
- Invite outside experts (at least once a year, funding permitting) to give a seminar on issues related to gender equality, diversity representation, sexual harassment, academic work conditions

7. Work-Life Balance

ZMO is committed to reducing existing and potential discriminatory structures that systematically disadvantage women. The establishment of a proper work-life balance has been shown to be necessary to attract female staff and junior researchers and fostering their retention. In addition, a

family-friendly work environment is a necessary precondition to ensuring that female researchers can advance within their careers.

As ZMO is a research institution in Berlin, Germany, employees are already afforded a number of statutory benefits that help establish an equitable work-life balance. There are existing regulations that limit the number of working hours and demands on employees during off-hours. There is also statutorily determined maternity/paternity leave (Mutterschutz and Elternzeit), parental benefits (Elterngeld) and child-support (Kindergeld). In accordance with German law, employees can apply for care leave for dependent relatives (Pflegezeitgesetz).

In addition, ZMO offers its employees flexible working hours. Employees are given the opportunity to work from home or other relevant locations, when required and justified. School holidays and care obligations are taken into consideration when scheduling mandated activities. In general, meetings and events are held during regular office hours, thereby allowing employees to utilize normal, generally available childcare facilities such as kindergartens and schools.

Through 2029, the Equal Opportunities Committee will continue to use its budget to cover childcare needs during events that take place outside of these hours. In addition, researchers with children under the age of 14 will continue to be eligible for additional funding to cover childcare costs associated with travel to conferences.

8. Sex/Gender Research

ZMO is the only research institution in Germany that deals with the Middle East, Africa, Eurasia, South and Southeast Asia in an interdisciplinary and historically comparative perspective. The focus of research at ZMO is the interaction of predominantly Muslim societies and their relationships with non-Muslim neighbouring regions. Issues relating to sex and gender in these societies falls within the centre's research focus, which moreover includes a longstanding research interest on related issues such as care, generational relations, illness and infirmity, and others.

Through 2029, researchers working on these issues will continue to be actively encouraged to apply for positions at ZMO or to approach ZMO about hosting third-party funded projects.

9. Gender Based Violence and Sexual Harassment

On 1 February 2024, ZMO published its 'Policy Against Sexual Harassment.' This policy document was drafted by the Equal Opportunities Committee in consultation with the ZMO Directorate and with the centre's staff. The document is available on ZMO's website.

ZMO recognizes all actions that are sexual in nature, unwanted, and experienced as a violation to be sexual harassment. In this regard, the centre follows the definition of sexual harassment put forth in the Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz (General Equal Treatment Act – Federal Government of Germany). This Act defines sexual harassment as:

“when an unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, including unwanted sexual acts and requests to carry out sexual acts, physical contact of a sexual nature, comments of a sexual nature, as well as the unwanted showing or public exhibition of pornographic images, takes place with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of the person concerned, in particular where it creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.” (AGG § 3 (4)).

The sexual harassment policy applies to all employees, guests, collaborators and affiliated researchers of ZMO. In addition, it extends to protect any students who are supervised by the above-mentioned parties.

The 'Policy Against Sexual Harassment' established a confidential complaint process for addressing instances of sexual harassment and gender-based violence when it arises. Complainants can initiate this process by approaching an Equal Opportunities Officer, the ombudsperson, a member of the Works Council, their supervisor, or the directorate.

The Equal Opportunities Officers are responsible for safeguarding this policy. They ensure that proper protocols are followed and that the process remains confidential. ZMO has no tolerance for retaliation against or victimization of complainants.

After the investigation is completed, the Equal Opportunities Officers are to file a recommendation for further steps to be taken either by the directorate or by the Equal Opportunities Committee Directly. Depending on the severity of the acts of harassment, the Equal Opportunities Officers can recommend the appropriate consequences in accordance with German Labour and Criminal Law.

Both the complainant and the accused can approach the Berlin State Office for Equal Treatment and Against Discrimination (Antidiskriminierungsstelle) for advice during and after the process. In addition, both parties have the right to file a complaint about the process, the recommendations, and the implementation to any of the following:

- the Leibniz Advice Centre for Conflict Guidance and Prevention
- the Office for Equal Opportunities and Diversity of the Leibniz Association
- the Berlin Labour Court (Arbeitsgericht Berlin)

Through 2029, ZMO will continue its zero-tolerance policy regarding gendered violence and sexual harassment in the workplace. The Equal Opportunities Committee will continue its efforts to educate researchers, support staff and the administration about these topics.