



**Thematic Evaluation at
Higher education and Research Institutions of Lower Saxony**

Gender Research

Report and Recommendations

This publication is an excerpt from the German report on gender research, which is available on our website (www.wk.niedersachsen.de).

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Part I:
Cross-Cutting Structures and
Recommendations

1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Objectives

The core task of the Scientific Commission of Lower Saxony (WKN) is to contribute to improving the quality of research carried out in Lower Saxony through appropriate review and advisory procedures. The Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony (MWK) has identified gender research as a cross-sectional field which would particularly benefit from the findings and recommendations of a systematic review and whose further development seems promising for the science system in Lower Saxony as a whole—an identification based on three existing reports on gender research and women's studies. A documentation on "Women's Studies in Lower Saxony between 1981 and 1991", commissioned by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, was prepared in as early as 1992.¹ The report entitled "Promotion of Women as a Reform of Higher Education, Women's Studies as a Criticism of Science"², prepared by the first Commission on Women's Studies to be appointed by the MWK, was published in 1994. "Findings in Women's Studies: Perspectives for Sciences, Technology, and Medicine" was eventually presented by the second Commission on Women's Studies in 1997.³

It is against the background of (1) the efforts of the institutions of higher education to establish a clear-cut profile of their own, (2) the progressive differentiation of institutions of the higher education system and (3) the increasing autonomy of higher education institutions that the MWK considers systematically obtained knowledge on the overall situation of gender research in Lower Saxony and the individual higher education institutions' priorities ('profiling') as particularly efficient in terms of a well-oriented science policy and scientific development.

The MWK therefore asked the WKN to initiate a systematic structural analysis on gender research at *all* higher education institutions in Lower Saxony and, in so doing, to pay special attention to the research priorities of the different institutions.

¹ Kutzner, Edelgard/Richter, Gudrun (1992): Dokumentation Frauenforschung in Niedersachsen - 1981 bis 1991. Hannover.

² Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kultur (ed.) (1993): Frauenförderung ist Hochschulreform – Frauenforschung ist Wissenschaftskritik. Bericht der niedersächsischen Kommission zur Förderung von Frauenforschung und zur Förderung von Frauen in Lehre und Forschung. Hannover.

³ Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kultur (ed.) (1997): Berichte aus der Frauenforschung: Perspektiven für Naturwissenschaften, Technik und Medizin. Bericht der niedersächsischen Kommission zur Förderung der Frauenforschung in Naturwissenschaften, Technik und Medizin. Hannover.

1.2. Methodology

The instruments used by the WKN for quality assessment are regularly reviewed for effectiveness and adapted to the development of the academic system. The procedure used for the comparative evaluation of disciplinary research on federal-state level, which was established in 1999, was itself subjected to an evaluation in 2006.⁴ As a consequence, it was decided to conduct fewer routine and discipline-oriented research evaluations in the future and to conduct reviews and consultations related to structural aspects and specific occasions instead. In accordance with this new request, the WKN's methodological portfolio was extended by two new modules, "research monitoring" and "topic-specific review procedures". The category of "topic-specific review procedures" is meant to identify the existing structures and their potential within thematically limited scientific fields. This method is primarily targeted at the structural properties of scientific fields and their potential for future development. An analysis of the research performance of the respective topic area is part of this procedure. In multi- or interdisciplinary topic areas, however, a detailed assessment of research achievements comparable to the WKN's "classical" research evaluation procedures, i.e. conducted right down to single professorships, is neither feasible⁵ nor necessary. Depending on the layout and nature of the respective topic as well as on the disciplines involved, their particular academic culture and the objectives pursued, topic-specific review procedures must be adapted by the subject-specific expert groups.

In view of these necessary methodological adaptations and subject-specific assessments, an expert group of six scholars selected for their scientific achievements and experience reflecting the multi- and/or interdisciplinary aspect of the field was set up. As is customary for the procedures organised by the WKN, each of the following expert group members teaches and researches at higher education institutions and research institutions outside Lower Saxony:

- Professor Dr Birgit Geissler, Bielefeld University (Chair/Sociology)
- Professor Dr Christina Brown, Humboldt University Berlin (Cultural Studies)
- Professor Dr Ineke Klinge, Maastricht University (Medicine)

⁴ Wissenschaftliche Kommission Niedersachsen (2006): *Forschungsevaluation an niedersächsischen Hochschulen und Forschungseinrichtungen. Bewertung des Evaluationsverfahrens*. Hannover.

⁵ First, the reporting units in the process of gender research evaluation are only partly involved in gender research. Consequently, the incongruence between reviewers and evaluation area not only makes it impossible to assess the effort-reward ratio on the sole basis of gender research data but also renders a complete survey virtually meaningless. Second, the multi- and interdisciplinary nature of the field makes it rather complicated to assess research achievements according to their scientific relevance. In multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields the particular characteristics of a field have an impact on the subject area, overlap with a possibly existing common core and, at any rate, make common detailed criteria impossible. Third, scientific innovation is, for the same reason, difficult to evaluate as it is dependent on the discourse of different disciplines as its horizon.

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- Professor Dr Birgit Riegraf, Paderborn University (Sociology)
 - Professor Dr Friederike Maier, Berlin School of Economics and Law (Economics)
 - Professor Dr Ines Weller, Bremen University (Technology and Sustainability)

In its first session on 13 January 2012, the expert group set itself the task to arrive at a definition of the field of gender research, to discuss its basic standards and to agree on an appropriate approach.

In what follows, gender research⁶ is understood as a scientific field, whose boundaries are drawn up with a view to the common research objective of being able to comprehend and explain the emergence, relevance, history as well as the (social, cultural, physical and material) practice of *relations and constructions* of both gender and sex in their interrelation⁷ Gender is in this field considered as a differentiating aspect in the formation, selection and operationalisation of theory as well as in the selection of methods. The research process is thus accompanied by a permanent reflection of the cognitive categories applied.

In this, the expert group merged the project layout resulting from the above definition and the ensuing methodological characteristics of the procedure with the objectives resulting from the Ministry's requirements into a single practical procedure. The approach chosen by the group is based on a self-assessment in tandem with a selective consultation. In a first step, the current situation of gender research in Lower Saxony—its institutional, personnel and intellectual integration at the higher education institutions and the future projects pursued at the respective locations—were assessed by means of a self-report from 18 public institutions of higher education in Lower Saxony.⁸ The past five years (2007-2011) were taken as the reporting period. Also, the expert group asked the Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony for information on the funding structures and political conditions relevant for gender research.

The self-reports requested by the end of 2011 were edited and, together with a report by the MWK on funding structures, served as the basis for a first internal evaluation conducted by the expert group on 21 and 22 February 2012. In addition, the group carried out a selective consultation on 24 and 25 April 2012, during which representatives from the Federal-State

⁶ Geschlechterforschung wird als der weitere Begriff genutzt, Genderforschung als auf die Erforschung des sozial zugewiesenen Geschlechts konzentriert.

⁷ In the German version of this paper, the term "Geschlechterforschung" ist used to denote that state-of-the-art gender research takes the complex interrelation of gender and sex into account. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, gender research is here used as the established term.

⁸ In consultation with the Committee's office and with the expert group, the University for Veterinary Medicine of Hannover Foundation did not take part in the procedure. Because of internal restructuring measures, Jade University Wilhelmshaven/Oldenburg/Elsfleth had to submit its report at a substantially later date and is therefore only treated descriptively.

Working Group of Institutions for Women's and Gender Studies in Lower Saxony⁹, from the universities of Hannover, Göttingen and Oldenburg as well as from the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück were heard. The selection of these discussion partners did not imply a judgement on the quality of gender research but was justified by the information needed by the expert group in excess of the self-report. The selectivity itself was based on pragmatic reasons: due to the diversity of the field, an extensive consultation would have been virtually impossible.

The criteria applied in accordance with the objective of the procedure were the quality of the structures existing at the individual locations and/or at federal-state level as well as the way gender research was fitted into the profile of the individual higher education institution—the quality of the structures being measured according to their enabling function for gender research. Next to the classical evaluation dimension of scientific quality, the capacity for sustainability is of particular relevance for the assessment of these structures. In particular, research conducted in small multi- and interdisciplinary fields requires a reliable coordination that is independent of individual researchers. Without those a long-term perspective for the field of research would be impossible.

The report includes universities and universities of applied sciences in the whole of Lower Saxony. The expert group also took into consideration the particularities of the research environment at the universities of applied sciences (high teaching loads of professors, little research-supportive infrastructure, no non-tenured academic positions, more application-oriented research in the context of specific business application or regional priorities, etc.). Since universities of applied sciences have, in recent years, increasingly developed research activities, decisions in favour of an application-oriented gender research are both feasible and conceivable.

The heterogeneous quality of the reports required intensive editing and limits the validity of at least the quantitative findings. In particular, the statements made in the reports on publications relevant for gender research, the training of next-generation researchers and its success as well as transfer activities were inconsistent.

As far as publications are concerned, some reports only listed publications relevant for gender research. Others listed all publications without explicitly labelling contributions to the field of gender research. To establish a minimum of comparability, the WKN's office went through the lists of publications and identified—with respect either to title or place of publication—publications that unambiguously contribute to the field of gender research. This revision allows a conservative estimate of the publication output can be undertaken. Because

⁹ Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Einrichtungen der Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung in Niedersachsen (LAGEN)

of the frequent lack of information on overall publication activity, however, it is impossible to relate this output to the total output of each of the participating researchers.

The training of next-generation researchers was only rarely reported beyond the cross-cutting structures; in particular, the question of what became of graduates after they had finished their degrees was almost completely ignored. This deficiency may be partly due to systematic reasons to do with the difficult data situation regarding young researchers in general. Therefore, what can be derived from the current data quality are, at most, very tentative conclusions.

Also, the validity of the statements on transfer activities is limited by the fact that information on this area is partly missing and, in general, very inconsistent. The conclusions drawn are only of a very general quality.

2. Gender Research in Science and Practice

2.1. Gender as a Cross-Cutting Scientific Issue – Forms of Organisation and Potential for Innovation

The mainstay of gender research in Germany—although it is also being conducted independently of organisations—are universities, universities of applied sciences and non-university research institutes. The identities and research profiles of the individual scholars in these various institutions depend to varying degrees on their respective gender research perspective. As a scientific field, gender research in these institutions takes different forms of institutionalisation—while a separate discipline in some, it is only one aspect of a discipline in others, and in yet others, it is the centrally coordinated sum of the individual research profiles of the scholars and their respective disciplinary affiliations. These disciplinary affiliations are, in fact, diverse, even though there is a prevalence of the social sciences and the humanities.

In the development of gender research, which incipiently¹⁰ would mainly focus on the female gender, the claim to grasp the complexity of influences, to which female (and, subsequently, male) life contexts are exposed, has in combination with epistemological and science-critical positions led to two convictions. First, that gender as a cross-cutting issue has a bearing on all areas of science. Second, that gender research needs to be organised along structures different from those of the traditional disciplines.

It is for this reason that gender research has, over the last two decades, become an ever more important instrument for the critique of science. In modern history of science, the dynamics and change of scientific terms have for quite some time been invoked as manifestations of, and driving forces for, the development of knowledge. Gender research, described by the philosopher of science Thomas S. Kuhn as the foremost paradigm shift to take place in the history of science in recent decades,¹¹ has provided a major impetus to this process. Gender research is thus not only a source of new insights with respect to gender relations and the analysis of their formation but also a tool of scientific innovation.

As a form of work and organisation, interdisciplinarity was right from the beginning the most important concept in women's studies and gender research. It formed the basis for the development of appropriately organised research centres and courses of education. Generally understood as an approach that combines several disciplines addressing a common question, interdisciplinarity comprises a methodological, terminological or

¹⁰ as women's studies,

¹¹ Thomas S. Kuhn on the 17th International Congress on the History of Science, Berkeley 1985. Cf. Orland, Barbara / Rössler, Mechthild (1995): *Women in Science—Gender in Science. Ansätze feministischer Naturwissenschaftskritik im Überblick*, in: Orland, Barbara / Scheich, Elvira (eds.): *Das Geschlecht der Natur. Feministische Beiträge zur Geschichte und Theorie der Naturwissenschaften*. Frankfurt am Main, p. 15.

conceptual exchange with a view to building and sharing a coherent conceptual framework. Interdisciplinarity thus cuts across the traditional disciplinary organisation of scientific research and teaching.

Nevertheless, there were also other forms of organisation and work that were formulated as concepts of gender research, and practically implemented to different degrees. The scientific study of gender may be understood as multidisciplinary gender research from the point of view of the respective disciplines, and although an exchange takes place between these disciplines, each of them largely defines and deals with its research issue independently, with the aim of advancing the discipline-oriented findings on “gender” as an object of research. The synthesis functions in an additive manner, merging the results separately obtained. This notwithstanding, women's studies and gender research retain their alignment with the disciplinary research and education systems.

Transdisciplinarity, in its first meaning, stands for the close link between scientific and extra-scientific knowledge. What takes place in the research process is the merger of scientific knowledge with knowledge from outside the scientific system. The prefix “trans-” denotes the crossing of boundaries between science and other sectors of society. Since the creation of knowledge is based on the specific character of the problems occurring in the context of application, the solutions are developed in relation to applications. A second meaning emphasises the level of cooperation of the disciplines involved. Transdisciplinary research here denotes the highest possible degree of integration of the different disciplines.

In recent years, the cross-sectional nature of gender research has been acknowledged as an opportunity for the as yet less involved disciplines. Under the slogan “Fixing the Knowledge”, the integration of gender issues into fundamental and applied research was identified as an opportunity for increasing the research excellence, creativity and social utility of the natural and engineering sciences as well as biomedical research.¹²

¹² Schiebinger, Londa / Klinge, Ineke (ed.) (2010): Gendered innovations. Mainstreaming sex and gender analysis into basic and applied research. Meta-analysis of gender and science research – Topic report. Luxemburg.

2.2. Theory and Practice: Gender Research, Equality Policies and Diversity

Gender research and equality policies have their roots in the “new” women's movement that emerged in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, despite some fierce conflicts between the two areas, it was recognised that gender research, which at the time was still focused on the female gender, provided the knowledge for practical measures of women's policy, and vice versa: the women's movement was the source of significant impetus and research questions as well as of material and symbolic support for gender research. There were intensive content-related interactions and a number of personnel and structure-related intersections.

Since then, both equality policies and gender research have undergone further professionalisation and institutionalisation in their respective social arenas. As a consequence, their interrelation has changed and loosened. Both areas are less dependent thematically than they used to be. They are part of different self-sufficient discussion contexts and, accordingly, have developed different horizons of relevance. True, the findings of gender research can and should continue to provide the scientific (reflective) knowledge for today's equality policies and practice. However, neither does the current practice of equality work incorporate the totality of findings in gender research or proceed on the sole basis of this reflective knowledge, nor does this context of application—even though the knowledge created by gender research finds a possible practical application in equality policies—provide the single horizon for the selection of research questions. Productive connections, however, continue to exist. The integration of the gender research perspective into all areas of science—and, thus, the expansion of gender research—is positively related to the increase in promotion of gender equality at the level of research staff and research institutions.¹³

Over the past few years, both arenas were confronted with the concept of “diversity”, a concept targeting economic, cultural and social variety and emphasising the potentials of a diverse society, staff or student body. The approach basically aims at the optimal use of the diversity of life and professional experience, viewpoints and values, emphasising the economic and social benefits. Gender, in this context, figures as *one* dimension of diversity amongst, for example, age, ethnicity or sexual identity. The diversity approach is more a political concept than a scientific programme. The practical approach for the personnel development of companies based on this concept is called “diversity management”. In business contexts, it often establishes a sometimes delimiting, sometimes positively reinforcing link to gender research. In the latter case, gender research and diversity approaches may complement each other. However, neither in the English-speaking nor in

¹³ Ibid.

the German-speaking world diversity approaches are as yet a research field with appropriately wide-ranging scientific reflection. Unlike good research on gender, which, by reflecting the factors involved in the genesis, existence and reproduction of the existing gender dichotomy, raises an awareness of other opportunities that is capable of practical implementation, diversity research is still in its infancy and the limits of the concept (a strong connection with economic usefulness, little theoretical reflection, little empirical research) are clearly recognisable.

3. Structures of Gender Research in Lower Saxony

3.1. Gender Research in Lower Saxony

3.1.1. History and Characteristics

Just as in the rest of the Federal Republic, gender research in Lower Saxony has emerged in the wake of the "new" women's movement from the mid-1970s onwards. The first documentation on women's studies in Lower Saxony stated that the latter's development until 1990 was characterised by the fact that themes and forms could be fleshed out only individually or in the context of the female scholars' research group in Lower Saxony.¹⁴ At the same time, the report noted an almost continuous increase in the number of projects related to women's studies and gender research. Finally, the survey showed a total of 188 (single) projects between 1981 and 1991, the vast majority of which were located at universities (only two at universities of applied sciences) or research institutes and financed by the implementing departments or institutions themselves. Almost half of the projects were at least partially financed by third-party funding. Most of the projects in women's research between 1981 and 1991 were conducted in the fields of social sciences and/or sociology, followed by history and pedagogy. The other disciplines mentioned (numbering 15, after all) followed at a large distance and featured only very few contributions.

A report prepared by the "Committee for the Promotion of Women's Studies" and the "Promotion of Women in Teaching and Research", which was also published at the beginning of the 1990s, paid a supplementary look at the structural and human resource backgrounds of women's studies in Lower Saxony at the beginning of the 1990s. The report found that the financial support and institutionalisation of women's studies in Lower Saxony had by then only been fragmentary and that considerable gaps existed in different subjects. A further point of criticism was that the universities of applied sciences had hardly been taken into consideration. With six professorships at three universities at the time of reporting, Lower Saxony had, according to the report, set up too few positions for women's studies. Also in teaching, women's studies had only in a few subjects at specific Institutions of higher education been institutionally anchored. Nevertheless, the Committee noted remarkable scientific achievements and described regional priorities with characteristic incorporations in scientific disciplines as well as specific institutionalisations. The Committee recommended the further development of women's studies in Lower Saxony at both an intra- and an interdisciplinary level. Next to various infrastructure and funding structure recommendations, the Committee advocated the presence of women's studies in each subject at each higher

¹⁴ Kutzner, Edelgard/Richter, Gudrun (1992): Dokumentation Frauenforschung in Niedersachsen - 1981 bis 1991. Hannover.

education institution as a reference point for interdisciplinary cooperation. In addition, it was recommended to set priorities. The Committee specifically recommended the establishment of an interdisciplinary institution of women's studies for the natural sciences, technology and medicine with six research priorities with one professorship each as well as a broadening by means of further 36 professorships at higher education institutions in Lower Saxony. Moreover, it advocated the further internationalisation of women's studies and its extension into as yet less active subjects.¹⁵

In the following years, two large temporary interdisciplinary cooperation projects were conducted in Lower Saxony. The Lower Saxony Research Network for Women's Studies and Gender Research in Science, Technology, and Medicine (NFFG) existed from 1997 to 2002. In the context of the EXPO 2000, the "International Women's University for Technology and Culture" (IFU) was carried out in Hanover and on other campuses located in Lower Saxony as well as in Bremen, Hamburg and Kassel.

Taking a look at the current situation, it becomes clear that since then a significant expansion of positions and infrastructure has taken place. According to the self-report, there are currently 23 professorships with an academic profile fully or partly related to gender¹⁶ at 14 different higher education institutions in Lower Saxony, which, in relation to all professorships, corresponds to an increase from 0.2 % to 0.7 %.¹⁷ During the period under review, however, ten of these professorships were vacant or awaiting appointment. Eight of these vacant professorships were only created within the last call for proposals of the Maria Goeppert Mayer (MGM) Programme 2011.

There are eleven temporary professorships: eight so-called special-focus professorships funded by the MGM programme, two junior professorships and one professorship financed by the women professorship programme. Clearly, the professorships are predominantly (17) located at universities, one is located at a university with a scientific-artistic focus (*wissenschaftlich-künstlerische Hochschule*). The remaining five are distributed across universities of applied sciences in the federal state. Another professorship is divided between a university of applied sciences and a university.¹⁸ Also, the distribution of the professorships

¹⁵ Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kultur (Hg.) (1993): Frauenförderung ist Hochschulreform – Frauenforschung ist Wissenschaftskritik. Bericht der niedersächsischen Kommission zur Förderung von Frauenforschung und zur Förderung von Frauen in Lehre und Forschung. Hannover.

¹⁶ The definition used here is that by the data collection of the Centre for the Promotion of Women's and Gender Studies at Freie Universität Berlin, according to which job descriptions for professorships with an explicit provision for women's and gender studies are considered as fully gender-related, whereas professorship that merely include an additional reference to gender are considered partly gender-related. Professorships, whose tender specification mentions the gender research aspect only as "desired" are not counted as gender professorships.

¹⁷ 1993: 6 of 3,035 (0.2%); 2010: 23 of 3,307 (0.7%). Source: Hochschulen, ICE Niedersachsen.

¹⁸ One MGM professorship is divided between the Technical University of Braunschweig and the Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences Braunschweig/Wolfenbüttel.

among the disciplines has a strong emphasis in the humanities and social sciences; even so, seven professorships are located outside this area.

If one includes the researchers in the field of gender studies whose academic profile does not include an explicit reference (neither full nor part) to gender, then 160 of 3,307 professors in Lower Saxony (4.8 %) ¹⁹ may, albeit to different degrees, be considered involved in publication and/or project work in the field of gender studies. The same applies to 137 members of academic staff. ²⁰ These active researchers are employed at 16 institutions of higher education. Here, too, there is a clear predominance of the humanities and social sciences (as opposed to sciences, technology and medicine), and of universities (as opposed to universities of applied sciences). Moreover, the positions in question are concentrated at a small number of universities. The universities of Oldenburg and Göttingen have more than 20 professors active in gender research each, the universities of Hildesheim and Lüneburg, more than ten each. ²¹ In relation to the size of the institutions, the universities of Oldenburg, Vechta and Hildesheim particularly stand out. Just under 13 % of all active professors at Oldenburg and Vechta are active in the field of gender research, and around 16%, at Hildesheim.

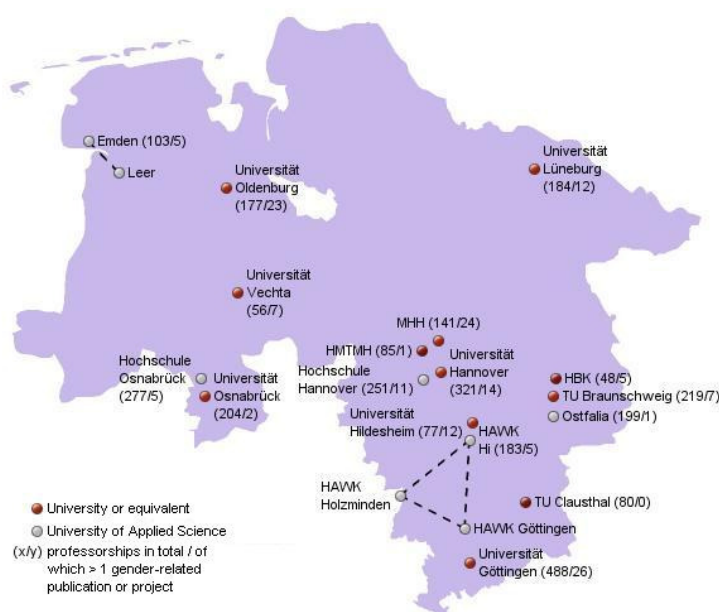


Fig. 1: Gender Research in Lower Saxony

stepmap.de 

¹⁹ The number of professors is from 2010 and includes all public institutions of higher education in Lower Saxony, Source: Hochschulen, ICE Niedersachsen. In relation to the institutions included here, which offer a slightly smaller total number of professors (3,057), it corresponds to 5.2%.

²⁰ The relation to the total number is more problematic in this case, as the statistical categories do not match the unit formed here.

²¹ The MHH has not been considered.

3.1.2. Cross-Cutting Research and Funding Structures

3.1.2.1. Research Centres and Networks

A total of ten supportive structures for women's studies and gender research has been established at higher education institutions in Lower Saxony since the late 1990s:

- Interdisciplinary Working Group on Gender Studies, University of Hanover (1999-2008)
- Centre for Interdisciplinary Women's and Gender Studies, University of Oldenburg (2000, et seq.)
- Gender Research Coordination Unit, University of Göttingen (2001, et seq.)
- Centre for Interdisciplinary Women's and Gender Studies, University of Hildesheim (2001, et seq.), together with the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Hildesheim / Holzminden / Göttingen HAWK (2001, et seq.)
- Braunschweig Centre for Gender Studies, University of Braunschweig, together with Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences Braunschweig/Wolfenbüttel and the Braunschweig University of Art (2003, et seq.)
- Sophie Drinker Institute for Women's and Gender Studies in Musicology – a free research institute in Bremen, associated with the University of Oldenburg since 2003 (2003, seq.)
- Research Centre Music and Gender (FMG), Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media (2006, et seq.)
- gender_archland – Forum for Gender Competence in Architecture Landscape Planning, University of Hannover (2006, et seq.)
- Centre of Excellence for Gender-Sensitive Medicine, Hannover Medical School (2009, et seq.)
- Federal-State Working Group of the Institutions of Women's and Gender Studies in Lower Saxony (LAGEN, 2007, et seq.)

The Interdisciplinary Working Group on Gender Studies at the University of Hanover was dissolved in 2008. Six structures are concentrated at a single higher education institution. Gender research in Lower Saxony has currently three inter-university supportive structures allocated with very different personnel and financial resources.

The Centre for Interdisciplinary Women's and Gender Studies (zif) is a cooperative institute of the University of Hildesheim and the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Hildesheim/Holzminden/Göttingen, and was founded in 2001. The Braunschweig Centre for Gender Studies is a common structure of the University of Braunschweig, Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences Braunschweig/Wolfenbüttel and the Braunschweig University of Art. The two institutions are presented in more detail in the respective sections on the higher education institutions.

The Federal-State Working Group of Institutions for Women's and Gender Studies in Lower Saxony (LAGEN) was founded in 2007 and currently has 25 members (natural persons) from all active centres of the federal state. It is chaired by Professor Bettina Wahrig (Technical University of Braunschweig). The Working Group currently meets twice a year. According to the self-report, it has no financial resources of its own and exists solely on the basis of its members' initiative and, in particular, of the respective spokeswoman or spokesman.

The Working Group has set itself the goals of promoting the networking of Gender Studies in Lower Saxony, strengthening the successful already existing cooperation of the institutions, initiating joint research and teaching projects and coordinating the representation of research policy interests. It cooperates closely with the Conference of Women's Representatives at Institutions of higher education in Lower Saxony.

Since its establishment, LAGEN has discussed joint research topics and enabled the cooperation of individual sites via teaching projects, meetings and common applications for visiting professorships. Moreover, the format of a common interdisciplinary graduate colloquium was agreed and implemented. The latter has the task to coordinate gender research of next-generation researchers in Lower Saxony and to promote and consolidate the networking of gender research institutions and locations. So far, the colloquium has taken place three times at different locations.

3.1.2.2. Funding Structures for Gender Studies in Lower Saxony

The Federal State of Lower Saxony has purposefully and systematically strengthened gender research since the mid-1990s. According to a recommendation of the First Committee for Women's Studies at the Ministry for Science and Culture (MWK), a department was set up for the "promotion of women" in as early as 1994 (today: 22 - Gender Equality), which was also concerned with gender research. In total, funds in the amount of EUR 4.3 million were made available between 2001 and 2010 on the part of the Federal State²²; another EUR 1 million of reciprocal financing came from the higher education institutions.

Following recommendations of the Second Committee for Women's Studies, the Lower Saxony Research Network for Women's Studies and Gender Research in Science, Technology, and Medicine (NFFG) was established in 1997 with a total financial volume of DM 7.5 million for five years.

In 2001, the Maria Goeppert Mayer (MGM) Programme for international gender research was started. The objectives of the programme were the introduction of the international standards of women's studies and gender research in Lower Saxony, the continuation and intensification of international contacts, the structural anchoring of gender research in teaching and research, the promotion of interdisciplinarity as well as the promotion of next-generation researchers in the field of gender research. Visiting professorships and lectureships have been awarded and centres for women and gender studies, supported.²³ Since 2007, it has been possible to apply for visiting professorships that last more than one semester. The aim of this amendment was to create greater sustainability and to provide an incentive for a structural anchoring by the start-up funding of (permanent) professorships with an academic profile partly or fully related to gender research. From the beginning of the programme, all kinds of institutions of higher education have been eligible for these funds.

The two funding lines of visiting professorships and centres were related to each other: the visiting professors were to provide the centres with a variety of stimuli, in particular with regard to international cooperation. The centres, in turn, were to serve the visiting professors as permanent contact points and to facilitate the integration into teaching and research at the respective higher education institution.

²² Including funds from the Higher-Education Scientific Programme (2001-2006).

²³ Initially, funds for a C3 professorship were provided (for the salary of a "W"-professorship, as from 2004) for one semester, with particular focus on foreign academics. The MGM Professorship is designed primarily as an interdisciplinary teaching professorship. The visiting professorship is mainly intended for disciplines with shortcomings in the field of women's and gender studies.

Right from the beginning, higher education institutions in Lower Saxony have extensively used the Maria Goeppert Mayer Programme.²⁴ Between 2001 and 2010/2011, 91²⁵ visiting professors, of which 45 came from abroad,²⁶ benefited from the funding scheme to conduct research and teach at higher education institutions in Lower Saxony. In total, visiting professorships for 115 semesters were awarded,²⁷ and an additional 25 teaching assignments, over the programme period. A series of publications, which was also supported by programme funding and published by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Women's and Gender Studies at the HAWK and the University of Hildesheim Foundation, documented the visiting professors' work in six volumes, each of which with its own thematic focus.

In the period under review (between summer semester 2006 and winter semester 2010/2011), the Federal State of Lower Saxony funded 53 visiting professorships and 12 lecturers.²⁸ Eight special-focus professorships were selected in the first funding period and are now in the process of being appointed. Both the visiting professorships (52 of 53) and the teaching assignments (10 of 12) were almost exclusively occupied by female researchers.

Three universities in Lower Saxony recruited a comparatively high number of Maria Goeppert Mayer visiting professors. At the University of Oldenburg, 17 visiting professors received funds from the programme. It was followed by the University of Göttingen, where 15 visiting professors received funding, and the Technical University of Braunschweig with 12 visiting professors. As far as scientific areas are concerned, the majority of professorships funded by the Maria Goeppert Mayer Programme—namely, 43—came from the humanities and social sciences (2006-2011). There were 15 professors of natural sciences, including one professor of medicine. Four other professorships were of an interdisciplinary nature or not clearly assignable.

Moreover, start-up funding from the programme was used for the establishment of five centres over the 10-year funding period (2001-2010). In target agreements for (*Zielvereinbarungen*) the period of 2010-2012, the respective higher education institutions have agreed to continue the centres' work as of 2011 from their own resources.

²⁴ Over the programme period between summer semester 2001 and winter semester 2010/2011, 204 applications were submitted, of which 130 (64%) were allowed. The rejection rate is 36%. (14 of 16 of the universities eligible to file an application participated in the programme.)

²⁵ Counted by persons.

²⁶ Of 25 nationalities altogether.

²⁷ Of which 35 semesters (around 30%) in the form of a part-time employment.

²⁸ Counted by persons.

A first evaluation of the MGM Programme from 2010²⁹ came to a somewhat ambivalent assessment of the funding programme. One point of criticism, for instance, was that, although the programme was very much in demand, the intended structural anchoring of gender research had not been achieved everywhere, and that positive effects, e.g. in the form of seminal international networking, were only observed at the level of individual researchers. The overwhelmingly positive assessment of the benefit afforded by the visiting professorship for the incumbent's research career might be taken as indicative of an unintended side effect of the funding. Despite the fact that the effects intended by the structural anchoring at the higher education institutions in Lower Saxony had, at least according to this evaluation, not (yet) been fully implemented, the programme, in general, had a clear impact on the training of next-generation researchers in German gender research.

As suggested by the scientific advisory board, the MGM Programme was oriented more towards the specific profiles of the higher education institutions. In connection with the restructuring of the programme, the funding period was extended to a maximum of four or five years. Funding of up to 70% of the total costs is available for W3, W2 as well as W1 professorships with an academic profile partly or fully related to gender research (both at universities and universities of applied sciences). Eight of these so-called special-focus professorships (*Schwerpunktprofessuren*) were budgeted in 2011 and are now in the process of being appointed.

²⁹ Metz-Göckel, Sigrid (2012): Investitionen und Lernprozesse im Kontext der Internationalisierung der Hochschulen. Erfahrungen mit dem Maria-Goeppert-Mayer-Programm in Niedersachsen. in: Cremer-Renz, Christa / Jansen-Schulz, Bettina (eds.): Von der Internationalisierung der Hochschule zur Transkulturellen Wissenschaft. Wissenschaftliche Konferenz 2010 an der Leuphana Universität Lüneburg. Baden-Baden, pp. 81-99. The evaluation was based on a survey conducted at universities in Lower Saxony and directed at funded visiting professors and within the programme's scientific advisory board. 14 of 12 universities participated in the survey. 25 of 86 professors responded to the answers put to them (41%).

3.2. Gender Research in Lower Saxony in Context

3.2.1. Research Structures in Context

According to the Centre for the Promotion of Women's and Gender Studies at the Free University of Berlin (ZEFG),³⁰ there are currently 169 professorships with an academic profile partly or fully related to gender research at German universities and universities of applied sciences,³¹ of which 129 at universities, and 40 at universities of applied sciences. The majority of professorships with an academic profile related to gender research is found in the disciplines of sociology or the social sciences (29), education (15), arts and art history (14) and literature (12). There are ten professorships in the area of gender and diversity studies.³²

In total, Lower Saxony's share of professorships with an academic profile partly or fully related to gender research (23, of which 17.5 at universities) ranks third behind North Rhine-Westphalia (48 professorships, of which 36 at universities) and Berlin (32, of which 28 at universities). However, in relation to the total number of professorships, Lower Saxony, with a share of 0.7% ranks second behind Berlin with a share of 1.17%. Of altogether 48 centres for women's and gender studies nationwide currently listed by the ZEFG, eight—the largest number per federal state—are located in Lower Saxony. Six centres are located in North Rhine-Westphalia, and five, in Berlin.

	Lower Saxony	North Rhine-Westphalia	Berlin
Number of professorships at public institutions of higher education (2010)	3307	7384	2745
Number of professorships with an academic profile partly or fully related to gender research	23	48	32
in %	0.7%	0.65%	1.17%

Source: Federal Statistical Office, major reports, ZEFG, own survey

According to the Center for the Promotion of Women's and Gender Studies (ZEFG), the structured training of next-generation researchers within the framework of a postgraduate programme run by the German Research Foundation (DFG) is currently offered at three

³⁰ <http://www.zefg.fu-berlin.de/datensammlung/index.html>

³¹ See note 13 for the definition.

³² The other 89 professorships are distributed among 29 disciplines.

universities (Berlin, Göttingen, Kassel) in two research training groups (*Graduiertenkollegs*), with Lower Saxony participating in one of them. Furthermore, nine research groups (*Forscherguppen*) are currently engaged at German universities in Women's and Gender Studies projects. None of these projects is located in Lower Saxony.

As far as teaching is concerned, the ZEFG currently documents 25 study courses or major study areas in the field of Women's and Gender Studies at German higher education institutions. At two universities in Lower Saxony, gender research can be studied as a major research area. The portfolio of the University of Oldenburg offers the possibility of a two-subject Bachelor degree in gender studies. At the University of Göttingen, students can enroll in a Bachelor's and/or a Master's programme in gender studies.

3.2.2. Funding Structures in Context

Apart from the funding programmes available from the federal state, there are currently no specific research funding programmes or formats targeted at the promotion of gender studies. In the context of the German Research Foundation (DFG)'s "Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality", however, the integration of gender research approaches is declared as one of many decision-making criteria for application procedures.

The DFG's general assembly decided on 2 July 2008 on the introduction and implementation of "Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality", initially for the period 2008-2013. The further substantiation and implementation of these gender equality standards is incumbent on the members of the DFG (applicants and/or institutions). The DFG supports this process in an advisory and coordinating capacity. In Spring 2011, the DFG's member institutions were to submit an interim report on the implementation of the gender equality standards, which was then to be evaluated by the Working Group on "Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality" and presented to the general assembly in summer 2011. The final report is scheduled for spring 2013.

The aim of the DFG's "Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality" is not only the equal participation of women in research but also the elimination of "blind spots regarding the importance of gender in content and methods of research".³³ According to the "Standards", the consideration of relevant gender and diversity aspects is an essential element of high-quality research.

For some of its funding lines,³⁴ the European Union, already in its Sixth Framework Programme for Research (2002-2006), specified in its calls for grant proposals that applicants ought to integrate the "gender dimension" in their research. The research design had to specify whether and in what manner biological and social gender was relevant for the proposed project's research topics and methods. In the Seventh Framework Programme, however, these requirements were reduced. The Directorate General for Research now funded the training of researchers in integration of gender aspects into research design and methods³⁵ as well as research on the relevance of gender as a category of analysis for all priorities in "Horizon 2020".³⁶

³³ DFG (2010): Forschungsorientierte Gleichstellungsstandards, p. 1.

³⁴ In the Sixth Framework Programme, Integrated Projects and Networks of Excellence had to draft Gender Action Plans, see European Commission (2003): *Vademecum: Gender mainstreaming in the Sixth Framework Programme. Reference guide for scientific officers and project officers*. Brussels: Directorate-General for Research.

³⁵ FP7 Gender Toolkit trainings.

³⁶ Gendered Innovations Project.

3.3. Conclusion

Gender research, as a research field, has great potential for innovation. Using inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary forms of organisation, it is capable of bringing together different disciplines. As a research field in its own right, however, it also provides impetus for individual disciplines. Gender research, thus, is simultaneously a cross-disciplinary field and a branch of other disciplines. This potential is not limited to the obviously gender-related disciplines of the social sciences and humanities but also extends to technology and the natural sciences as well as medicine, law and economics.

For the development of gender research, its structural and substantial differentiation from the practice of gender equality policies and from the diversity approach is both helpful and necessary. This does, however, not imply that the productive interaction between them ought to be interrupted.

In Lower Saxony, the research field of gender research has grown significantly in the last few years, both in terms of the number of positions and the research structures at the individual higher education institutions and beyond them. Although the majority of positions is still concentrated in the humanities and social sciences, positions located in other disciplines have grown disproportionately. And even though universities of applied sciences continue to have fewer professorships with an academic profile partly or fully related to gender research than the universities, this number has risen since the 1990s as well.

4. General Recommendations

The expert group sees a positive overall development of gender research in Lower Saxony. In terms of structure, the gender research perspective is widely disseminated across various disciplines, even beyond the professorships with an academic profile explicitly related to gender research. However, there are still problems. Sometimes, gender research still amounts to nothing more than a reproduction of gender stereotypes. Also, there are clear gaps and deficiencies in the different disciplines which, in the opinion of the reviewers, urgently need to be remedied.

For one thing, this concerns the natural and technical sciences. Here, the experts recognise the positive trend of the last few years which was also promoted through strong support from the MWK. The number of positions in disciplines other than the humanities and social sciences has increased. The same is true for the curricula and the variety of subjects. However, gender research is, for the most part, embedded in the natural and technical sciences only on a temporary basis and often without being anchoring deep enough in the content of the disciplines. In most cases, issues of gender equality in education and career are considered the only possible and meaningful objects of gender research in the technical and natural sciences. Experts often have to deal with application-oriented professional or education-sociological issues not related closely enough to the structures of the relevant disciplines. In addition, the jobs were often only created for a short time and not made permanent, e.g. in the framework of visiting professorship programmes. In the opinion of the reviewers, explicitly application-oriented research has the tendency to make the wrong conclusion that gender research in the natural and technical sciences is limited to analysing gender relations among students in the MINT subjects and in their subsequent professional activities, thus perpetuating the reduction of gender research to gender equality issues. In the view of the group, application-oriented research areas thus cut themselves out of the decisive benefit. For example, application-oriented gender research on the genesis, dissemination and use of technology is an open and promising field, where the universities of applied sciences could have an advantage over universities. The recommendation of the group of reviewers is to more actively integrate the assistance offered on "gendered innovations" in numerous publications and handouts already in the development of research ideas and profiles.

Another deficiency of gender research (not only) in Lower Saxony, according to the experts, is the lack or low level of integration of the gender perspective in law and economics. Here, the group considers the last few years as a step backwards in terms of the research in these disciplines and their collaborative relationships. In view of the objects of research in these disciplines, the reflected inclusion of gender as a category ought to be a matter of course.

However, in terms of substance and content, this does not seem to be the case. A few very laudable exceptions apart, the feedback from the two disciplines was very weak, particularly in relation to their numerical importance at the institutions of higher education. Moreover, current methodological and theoretical developments in gender research were not received and/or implemented. The expert group considers both tendencies as highly worrying.

Especially in law and economics, modern and high-quality gender research is valuable not only in terms of producing knowledge about a socially relevant topic. It is also of special importance—and will be increasingly so in the future—for the research-based training at institutions of higher education. Especially in the training of lawyers and economists, valid knowledge of gender relations, according to the experts' opinion, will be necessary not only for the professional practice.

In the social sciences, the experts were concerned to recognise a stagnation, if not a decline. Over the last few years, some locations have downsized (Oldenburg, Osnabrück) or even closed (Hannover) gender research in the social sciences. Working environments that were very strongly research-oriented and, in some cases, internationally visible have thus been destroyed without good cause. Something similar can be said of the training studies in teacher education (*Berufswissenschaften der Lehrerbildung*) and the training of other educational staff located especially at the universities of applied sciences. Here, the expert group in Lower Saxony observed a growth too weak and inappropriate with regard to the importance of gender relations and constructions for the object of reflection.

According to the experts, the expansion and/or development of teaching programmes offered and of the structured training of next-generation researchers in the field of gender research could, also in other subjects, create an initial structure liable to bring together the different actors, especially at locations with heterogeneous disciplines and weakly coordinated in terms of gender research. Already the design of the teaching curricula for individual modules may serve as a bridge between different disciplines involved in gender research. These curricula and the said structures of training for next-generation researchers can and should also be developed across locations in order to achieve a coordinated focus avoiding both the concentration on individual higher-education institutions and imbalances in the university places offered.

Apart from the staff and content-related basis in the individual disciplines, the expert group observes a wide variety of viable interdisciplinary and, to some extent, cross-institutional support structures for gender research in Lower Saxony. These structures have been built up with a high level of personal commitment and are partially, albeit not always, supported only by individual initiative. However, support structures, in the opinion of the experts, are elemental, particularly for small multi- or interdisciplinary fields such as gender research. On

the one hand, generational changes involve the risk that established research traditions are (being) discontinued if they depend too strongly on individual persons. As far as cross-cutting areas are concerned, infrastructures and other necessary support structures can be implemented only with difficulty via the disciplinary organisation of the relevant institution of higher education, where the various disciplines and departments (must) give top priority to their own interests. Also, it is problematic for interdisciplinary fields to represent their interests towards the management of the respective higher-education institution, particularly with increasing autonomy of institutes of higher education. On an individual level, conflicts of interest may arise, while the disciplinary organisations primarily represent their own interests.

In terms of content, the mainstreaming approach poses a particular problem for gender research as a cross-cutting area. Mainstreaming as the maximum possible integration in all possible research approaches requires a mechanism for ensuring quality and assigning responsibility. It must be ensured that on as broad a basis as possible methodological and theoretical minimum standards are complied with. At the same time, responsibility must remain attributable in spite of the widening of integration. Also, the relatively small size of the field requires a decision on focuses, where a "critical mass" can be built up.

Centralised support structures not only allow the resource-saving maintenance of infrastructures beyond the traditional disciplinary organisation; as structures independent of individual persons they can also help manage the generational change that determines the situation of gender research. Here, it is possible to provide methodological and theoretical minimum standards and to regularly remind the management of higher-education institutions that its responsibility for substantial gender research goes beyond the symbolic use of the ideas of mainstreaming and diversity. In addition, central structures can and should actively represent the interests of gender research towards both the disciplines and the management of higher-education institutions.

In the view of the experts, however, some prerequisites need to be fulfilled in order for these tasks to be fulfilled. The central structures must be permanent and independent. They must be provided with a minimum of financial and also of symbolic resources (decision-making powers). In addition, their organisation should be clearly separated from that of other areas. This applies, for one thing, to the task of organising the teaching and, for another, to the task of equality. Both are core tasks mandatory for higher-education institutions and must not tie up the resources required for gender research. Also, there is the risk, especially when it comes to gender equality, that the two functions due to their organisational amalgamation are equated with one another if viewed from outside, which is detrimental for both. Ultimately, the centralised structures must allow of a certain content-related and organisational flexibility in accordance with the profiling processes of faculties and higher-education institutions. For

this purpose, they should develop a governance structure which ensures thematic independence as well as responsibility in relation to higher-level structures. It is recommended to check how support structures at higher-education institutions (individually or in association with each other) could be established or, if already existing, made stable and permanent. According to the reviewers, the commitment to gender research by the management of the relevant higher-education institution is of utmost importance in this context.

The expert group also recommends to provide LAGEN as a forum for effective self-organisation of gender research in Lower Saxony with adequate financial and material resources. This could be effected through the centralised support from the federal state, a joint support of higher-education institutions in the form of exemptions and/or secondments or direct financial aid. It is recommended to provide at least one permanent full-time position as well as an appropriate reduction of the teaching load for the respective spokesperson. In addition, this meta-structure could be equipped with funds for initiatives of its own, thus taking advantage of academic self-governing abilities also in this area. LAGEN is advised to pay more attention to the inclusion of the contents of the so far under-represented natural and technical subjects as well as those of medicine, law and economics. Also, the Working Group should give its governance structure a more binding character.

In general, the increasingly output-oriented forms of governance at the institutions of higher education are considered a special problem for cross-cutting areas and their structures. The publication or third-party funding output must be attributed not only to a person but also to the institutions. Here, fields that are transverse to established structures as well as structured fields such as gender research are at a disadvantage, since a clear attribution is impossible so that decisions are often taken in favour of the disciplinary organisation. The partially problematic third-party funding situation also results from the partially multi- or interdisciplinary approach of gender research. There are only few specific research funding opportunities. At the same time, the established research funding bodies maintain their forms of organisation and procedures. These forms and procedures not only reflect the departmentalisation of science and academic life; they are also systematic disadvantages to multi- or interdisciplinary applications and, hence, to the correspondingly structured parts of gender research.

It is recommended to adapt the indicators and/or provisions governing the performance-based funding allocation to the centralised structures of support for cross-cutting areas. For example, this could be achieved through double memberships, both of which are, correspondingly, taken into account. On the other hand, the group recommends to address the problem of the research funding structure in parallel on different levels. First, explicit

federal-state funding for gender research projects or, more generally, inter- or multidisciplinary research would be conceivable and certainly desirable. To avoid stigmatisation, a competitive call for proposals within the framework of promoting inter- or multidisciplinary research is recommended. In parallel, however, a corresponding adjustment of the selection processes in research funding should be aimed at. On a federal-state level, this may be achieved by following the model of the research-oriented standards on gender equality of the DFG (German Research Foundation) or the procedure of the European Union regarding the commitment to consider the gender dimension as a prerequisite for application.

The situation of gender research in Lower Saxony differs from one institution of higher education to the other in terms of development stage, integration into the profile of the institution and quality. The expert group notes that, given financial restrictions, extensive and in-depth gender research in all areas cannot be guaranteed at each location. It points out, however, that the respective decisions for different approaches should be reflected and justified also at the management level of the higher-education institutions. It depends largely on the commitment and the attitude of the respective management whether or not the opportunities can be used that gender research approaches in their various profiles provide for different research areas. In this context, it is essential to distinguish between gender equality and gender research and to avoid a purely symbolic use of gender mainstreaming and diversity management arguments. Also, it is important that individual professorships do not serve as a "fig leaf", and are not overburdened by excessive requirements (such as teaching at different faculties / teaching programmes alongside interdisciplinary research activities). Universities of applied sciences, in particular, should take advantage of the opportunity of systematically developing their gender research profile.

In addition, the expert group recommends targeted funding from the federal state. Broad-based funding should not be encouraged here. What looks clearly more promising is the firm and long-term funding of selected and already well-profiled approaches at higher-education institutions with a supportive management. A feasible instrument in this respect is, for example, appointments brought forward with an academic profile partly related to gender research. Also, the programme for women professors could be productively used for the promotion of gender research by applying additional federal-state incentives for professorships partly related to gender research. Such a dual use of the programme for women professors for the promotion of gender research could, however, have the disadvantage that gender research and gender equality are, at least from an external perspective, mixed up with each other.

In general, the expert group recommends a balance between disciplinary and interdisciplinary gender research as well as between researchers predominantly or

exclusively working in the field of gender research and a broad diversification of the gender perspective in other approaches. Not all locations in Lower Saxony are capable, either in terms of substance or of overall orientation, of offering the prerequisites necessary for good "basic research" in gender research and for high-quality and, at the same time, widely diversified research with a gender perspective. For this reason, it is particularly important in this context to create the above-mentioned centralised structures for supporting the broad integration of gender issues in research and to simultaneously make a reflected and concerted selection of priorities. This selection must be made, and answered for, by the various autonomous higher-education institutions in a constructive discourse with federal-state politics. It is the aim of the expert group that its recommendations on gender research at the various higher-education institutions in Lower Saxony and on their respective potential should inform and support this discourse.

