

# MZES Equal Opportunity Concept 2023

*This is an informal idiomatic translation of the German original. The German original was approved by the MZES Supervisory Board in March 2023.*

## Premise

It is of vital importance for the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES) as a research institute with high scientific quality standards to attract and retain excellent researchers and to promote their scientific development. In line with the equal opportunity strategy of the University of Mannheim, the MZES is committed to promoting equality between people of all genders and social diversity and to fostering intersectional diversity as a source of innovation. It aims to reflect our diverse society among its employees and provide its staff with an inclusive workplace that accommodates the diversity of individual backgrounds, careers, and needs.

The MZES is explicitly committed to respecting the needs and special challenges of employees from marginalised groups and overcoming existing disadvantages. It aims to support individuals belonging to marginalised, disadvantaged, or structurally underrepresented groups at all levels. This includes, among others, FLINTA\* (acronym for *Frauen, Lesben, intergeschlechtliche, nicht-binäre, trans und agender Personen* [women, lesbians, intersex, non-binary, trans and agender persons]), parents, members of ethnic and religious minorities, people with a migrant background, people of colour, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities and chronic illness, and individuals from non-academic backgrounds. As part of this task, the MZES has set itself the goal of collecting the perspectives of these staff members in a continuous dialogue and using these to further develop the institute as an inclusive workplace.

With its new equal opportunity concept, the MZES also responds to the findings of the 2022 MZES Employee Survey, the first systematic collection of data on the socio-structural diversity at the MZES and on the experiences and needs of its staff. The survey showed that members of many structurally underrepresented groups have lower job satisfaction and report negative experiences in the workplace more often than employees who do not belong to structurally underrepresented groups. The survey also stressed the need to develop structures and mechanisms that enable not only, but especially, members of these groups to express their needs and receive support. Against the backdrop of the specific challenges and proposals for change that can be derived from the employee survey, the goals and measures formulated in the following section are meant as workplace-related supplements to the equal opportunity strategy of the University of Mannheim.

## Objective

### Promoting members of underrepresented groups

The MZES recognises that the structural underrepresentation of marginalised groups at all levels of academia is counterproductive to the goal of social diversity. It is committed to actively reducing barriers to entry and career advancement for members of these groups.

To this end, the MZES will:

- Support the goal of gender equality between women and men at all levels of academia, as defined in the equal opportunity strategy of the University of Mannheim. The MZES explicitly pursues the goal of equal treatment of individuals of all marginalised genders (FLINTA\* persons). This includes both people with and without a legal gender marker '*divers*' or with a blank gender entry in the civil status registers.
- Employ qualified applicants for all positions, explicitly ensuring equal treatment of applicants from disadvantaged groups at all stages of the application process.
- Pay attention to diversity when inviting speakers to the colloquia of the research departments and other event series. The MZES aims to offer a platform to researchers from structurally underrepresented groups. A high level of diversity in the MZES colloquia increases the visibility and opportunities of researchers from underrepresented groups. It serves as an important role model for MZES staff who themselves belong to one or more of these groups and offers them the opportunity to expand their network. It also broadens the range of topics and perspectives that are presented and discussed in MZES colloquia.
- Promote staff members from marginalised or structurally underrepresented groups within the legal possibilities, for example by supporting targeted training measures or by holding pertinent events at the MZES.

### Diversity, intersectionality, and inclusion in everyday work life

The MZES offers an inclusive and diverse workplace for all colleagues. Therefore, the MZES specifically addresses the concerns of employees of all marginalised genders, parents, employees with a migration background, people of colour, members of ethnic and religious minorities, members of the LGBTQ+ community, employees with disabilities or chronic illnesses, scientists from non-academic backgrounds, and members of other marginalised and structurally underrepresented groups. It gives voice to members of these groups, engages seriously with their perspectives, and raises awareness across the institute of the challenges they face in their daily lives.

Building on the insights gained from, among others, the results of the 2022 MZES Employee Survey, the MZES aims to take concrete measures to promote inclusion in everyday interaction and to respond to the needs of marginalised and underrepresented groups:

- The MZES offers a family-friendly working environment to make it easier for colleagues with children or relatives in need of care as well as for colleagues whose families do not live close to Mannheim to reconcile family and work. This includes measures such as flexible teleworking for all employees and scheduling regular series of events at family- and commuter-friendly times, i.e., Tuesdays to Thursdays between 10:00 and 15:15, as well as the possibility of virtual participation through hybrid options.
- The MZES uses gender-inclusive language<sup>1</sup> in official communication (e.g., on the website and in internal emails) to ensure the inclusion of employees of all genders. When addressing people personally, it uses gender-neutral forms, unless the person being addressed wishes to be addressed differently.<sup>2</sup> It provides compact information on gender-inclusive language to offer employees the opportunity to deal with the topic proactively. The MZES also lobbies for the designation of all-gender toilets and the equipment of all toilet rooms with hygiene waste bins.
- Internal announcements, invitations, and communications are always (also) formulated in English so that staff members who are not fluent in German can understand them without the help of their colleagues.
- The MZES respects the religious diversity of its staff. It avoids denominationally exclusive designations for internal events.<sup>3</sup> It demands and promotes understanding for temporary absences during religious holidays and commemoration days and makes it easier for its employees to integrate religious practices (such as prayers or fasting) into their daily work.
- The MZES aims to promote inclusion at on-site events. In addition to scheduling these events at family-friendly times, it aims to accommodate the needs of people with health restrictions. This includes regular breaks (e.g., to take medication), fixed end times, and the provision of inclusive catering that provides options for people with common food allergies, respects religious dietary requirements (e.g., kosher, halal), and fully lists relevant ingredients (i.e., allergens, dairy, type of meat).

### Conflicts, respect, and mutual appreciation

The MZES insists on maintaining mutual respect and appreciation at all levels. It is expressly committed to the senate resolution from 26 February 2014 'Code of Conduct of the University of Mannheim'. Accordingly, it underlines its commitment against intimidation, stalking, hostility, humiliation, degradation, insults, sexual harassment, discrimination, inappropriate aggressive behaviour, and bullying. It emphasises the special responsibility of supervisors and employees with personnel responsibility to stand up for the dignity of their employees.

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<sup>1</sup> For example 'Liebe Kolleg\*innen' instead of 'Liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen', 'Alle Mitarbeitenden des MZES' instead of 'Alle Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter des MZES'; in English: use of the singular 'they' instead of 'he or she'.

<sup>2</sup> For example, 'Guten Tag Vorname Nachname' instead of 'Sehr geehrte Frau' oder 'Sehr geehrter Herr'; in English: 'Dear Firstname Lastname' instead of 'Dear Ms' or 'Dear Mr'.

<sup>3</sup> For example, 'end-of-year party' instead of 'Christmas party', 'hiking day' instead of 'Pentecost hike'.

The MZES actively supports employees who have made negative experiences and who turn to the equal opportunities representatives, staff representatives, superiors, colleagues, or the executive board. It takes their accounts seriously and actively contributes to solving the problem if this is desired. The MZES promotes a positive error culture that enables employees in conflict situations to enter into a dialogue with each other and to learn from such situations.

The MZES acknowledges its responsibility to help resolve conflicts. It can offer conflict parties moderation by an external person. It can refer the conflicting parties to the responsible offices within the university. The MZES supports those affected by potential violations of the code of conduct in exercising their right of complaint. It contributes to the implementation of conflict resolutions within the scope of its possibilities.

## Accompanying measures

### Evidence-based equal opportunity measures

Every three years, the equal opportunities representatives, in cooperation with the staff representatives and the Data and Methods Unit, conduct an anonymous survey among all MZES staff members to evaluate the effectiveness of the equal opportunity measures and the general job satisfaction. This survey gives MZES staff the opportunity to subjectively evaluate the equal opportunities measures at the MZES. It offers all employees, including members of disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, the opportunity to share their perspectives and communicate their needs.

## Representation

The employees of the MZES (excluding student assistants) elect an equal opportunities representative and a deputy from their own ranks for a two-year term. The rights and responsibilities of the equal opportunities representatives include in particular:

- Participating in board meetings in an advisory capacity for agenda items touching on equal opportunity issues in all of the above-mentioned areas.
- Submitting requests to the executive board.
- Participating in recruitment procedures for research fellow positions and positions in the MZES infrastructure.
- Managing a separate budget for equal opportunity measures in agreement with the director and managing director of the MZES. The budget is set annually by the executive board according to the supervisory board's guidelines.
- Conducting internal surveys to collect anonymous data about equal opportunities. The results are presented in the annual report and supports tailoring the equal opportunity measures to the needs of the employees.
- Compensation for the additional workload at the expense of their own academic activities through the support by a student assistant with up to 40 hours per month; the decision on this is made by the managing director.

## Training and awareness raising

From their budget, the MZES equal opportunities representatives regularly offer workshops on topics regarding equal opportunity and diversity, to which all employees of the MZES are invited. The equal opportunities representatives also respond to suggestions for topics from the staff.

## Self-organisation

The MZES expressly welcomes initiatives for the self-organisation of its employees, in particular those that serve the exchange and representation of the interests of disadvantaged and structurally underrepresented groups. It actively supports these initiatives by providing premises or setting up communication channels (e.g., mailing lists or teams). Employees can receive financial support from the equal opportunities representatives' budget—if available—for planning and implementing events related to equal opportunity and diversity.

## Public relations

The MZES regularly publishes statistical data on staff development by gender<sup>4</sup> as well as other information on inclusion and diversity at the institute in its annual report.

On its website and social media channels, the MZES presents itself as an inclusive and attractive workplace. The MZES outlines the activities of the equal opportunities representatives and other MZES-based diversity initiatives. These measures emphasise that the MZES is an attractive workplace. The equal opportunity concept is published on the institute's website in German and English. It refers to contact persons at the faculty and the university who can support employees in the event of negative experiences in the workplace.

## Evaluation

The MZES equal opportunities representatives commit to submitting an annual report to the executive board on the development of the MZES with respect to equal opportunity and diversity in all the above-mentioned areas and the use of the budget of the equal opportunities representatives.

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<sup>4</sup> The data on staff development by gender only reflect the information recorded in the university's data register.