

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): Action Plan 2023-2025

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#### 1. Context: UTN in Its Foundation Phase

The University of Technology Nuremberg (UTN), established in January 2021, is the first newly founded public state university in Bavaria, Germany since 1978. Currently (in 2023), the University is still in the process of setting up organizationally, digitally, and physically. For example, the new campus is under construction and the first master's program, Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, will be launched in October 2023. In the long term, the University expects to provide space for up to 240 professors and 6,000 students on a newly built campus, which extends over 37 hectares.

At present, two departments define UTN's academic profile: The Department of Engineering and the Department of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Founded in February 2022, the Department of Engineering chose the field of artificial intelligence and robotics to be UTN's initial disciplinary focus. However, there are plans to add other engineering disciplines (e.g., bioengineering). In April 2023, the Department of Liberal Arts and Sciences was established, which combines humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Together, the two departments provide innovative and interdisciplinary input.

UTN aims to be a modern, international, innovative, and interdisciplinary university with digitized working processes while also serving as a role model for the German academic system. To this end, UTN has decided to establish department structures that interlace engineering and computer sciences, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences in a targeted manner and suggests an integrated concept based on new methods in research, teaching, and administration. The target value for the proportion of international professors of foreign origin is set at 35% for 2030.

Additionally, the University's goal is for 40% of other academic staff and students to come to UTN from other home countries.

The challenge of building a new university from scratch entails uncertainty, requires a high degree of institutional reflexivity, and calls for an active involvement of all employee groups and their interests. To be successful in supporting all UTN members and to build a community and a sense of belonging, a strategic plan for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is essential. Designed as an initial concept, this document thus presents a DEI action plan for the early stage of UTN's foundation phase. Drawing on UTN personnel data already available, it sets preliminary target values, proposes a first set of measures to be established at UTN, and includes suggestions to ensure the quality of this concept.

## **2. DEI-Related Measures 2023-2025**

DEI refers to a set of values and practices aimed at creating a more inclusive and equitable workplace or learning place in which everyone feels valued and respected and has equal opportunities to succeed. As part of our DEI efforts, we are committed to promoting gender diversity and inclusivity and understand that gender is not limited to a binary concept. Our policies, programs, and initiatives aim to create a campus culture that fosters acceptance of gender diversity, and we are continuously working to improve and expand our efforts in this area.

As mandated by UTN's executive board in December 2022, a project group will be created in 2023 with the goal to develop a detailed DEI concept for our university. The group will effectively start work in fall 2023. Its members will bring perspectives and interests from different units of the University to jointly develop a concept for the benefit of all university members. Over the next year, the evolved concept will be discussed and approved by UTN's Steering Board. With this approval, the new DEI concept will immediately come into effect and replace this action plan. UTN is currently advertising for the position of a DEI Specialist to coordinate the project group's work and all other DEI-related activities, including establishing a DEI office.

To be able to set up both effective and realistic measures, this initial DEI-related action plan must consider the special situation of a university in its founding phase and its relatively limited resources. While the scope of a future detailed DEI concept will be designed to comprise a much wider assortment of topics, the contents of this action plan focus on a few selected measures. The DEI-related measures mentioned hereafter already have been (or will be) implemented within the next two years and, as such, provide a starting point for a more far-reaching DEI strategy. From the outset, it will be important for DEI measures to be addressed at the University's highest level of management, namely the Founding President and Vice-Presidents, Kanzler, and department chairs. Plans for UTN's detailed actions for the next two years are outlined below.

**UTN's Women's Representative.** Currently, the Founding Vice President for Academic and International Affairs holds this office on an interim basis. An election process will begin in winter 2023 or spring 2024.

**UTN Award.** With the establishment of this research award, UTN has decided to launch a new internal funding instrument aimed at promoting gender equality in disciplines in which women are currently underrepresented. Every three years, female professors have the chance to apply for this competitive award. Applications will be judged by the quality of their suggestions for DEI-related measures (e.g., workshops, lectures series, or mentoring offers). The award serves two objectives. First, successful applicants will receive a fixed prize money in the amount of € 15,000, which they can use flexibly for their professorship. Second, additional funds will be made available for the implementation of the DEI measures proposed in successful applications. By funding and implementing the DEI measures centrally at the university level, we will ensure that winning the prize does not become a pyrrhic victory for awardees; in other words, receiving the prize must not entail an additional burden to implement the proposed DEI actions.

**Lecture Series.** UTN's Department of Engineering has launched a lecture series entitled, Women in AI and Robotics. The idea of this series is to invite rising female stars, such as junior research group leaders or junior professors, to present the main achievements of their academic career. In doing so, they become role models for other women, fostering younger female researchers in navigating the academic world, and ideally, encouraging them to embark on this career path. Depending on the specific challenges in individual thematic clusters to be established at UTN, future DEI-related events might set a different focus in terms of their format, content, and dimensions of structurally disadvantaged groups (e.g., social, ethnic, cultural).

**Recruiting professors.** When advertising professorships and appointing professors, UTN adheres to all relevant DEI-related legal requirements. The same applies to the composition of its appointment committees and the selection of reviewers in appointment proceedings. In some aspects, however, UTN already goes beyond these requirements. For example, committee members can be tasked with a targeted search for nationally and internationally renowned researchers (active recruitment) and, by this means, address respectively underrepresented applicant groups.

**Appointment symposiums** are generally held in English. An integral part of all of these symposiums will be assessing to what extent invited applicants are aware of the range of DEI measures and strategies. Moreover, we inform applicants early about our dual career services and help in finding vacancies in crèches, kindergartens, and schools. In the future, we aim to further expand our DEI measures in appointment proceedings. For example, when advertising professorships, our goal is to set up a systematic recruiting strategy for attracting members of underrepresented groups.

**Strengthening gender and diversity competencies.** In the years 2023-2025, UTN will launch its first specific DEI measures to strengthen gender sensitivity, empowerment, and diversity. From 2024 onward, the DEI project group will coordinate a program on unconscious bias directed toward both UTN's academic and non-academic staff, which will combine online hands-on meetings, on-site events, and mentoring support or group coaching. Second, UTN's decidedly international orientation also suggests focusing on the topic of intercultural communication. Employees and students from different countries, with diverse religions, or with different skin colors are encouraged to team up in language tandems facilitated by an external expert. In addition to expanding their foreign language skills, they will be given the opportunity to better understand culture-specific behaviors or attitudes. Bringing together people from different cultures will help us create an inclusive community.

**Dual Career Services.** Since early 2023, UTN has been a member of the Dual Career Netzwerk Nordbayern (DCNN), an association of 18 higher education institutions in northern Bavaria with the aim to support newly appointed professors as well as their partners and families. In addition to helping partners of newly appointed employees find a position in the Nuremberg metropolitan area, the DCNN also provides a network of childcare facilities, schools, further education, and training institutions.

**Welcome Center.** Since its foundation in April 2023, UTN's Welcome Center has striven to promote the establishment of a welcoming and friendly culture for both international and national students and researchers. Addressing national as well as international people is one of the main ideas UTN is using to make a difference for an integrative and open-minded culture. To foster the success of our students as well as doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, UTN provides support in non-academic questions, such as visa issues, residence law, health insurance, and formalities for entering or leaving Germany. The Welcome Center also organizes events and excursions to cultivate a sense of community and to strengthen intercultural understanding and exchange.

**Accessibility.** The fact that the UTN campus is currently being built from the ground up presents a unique opportunity to use up-to-date technologies to build an energy-efficient, sustainable, and accessible campus. Both physical and digital accessibility (design for all) are needed to include all people. In addition, as a state university, UTN must undergo a three-step audit process to successfully comply with Bavarian regulations to ensure the highest standards of accessibility for buildings in public areas. To foster a culture of equity and inclusion, unisex toilets are planned for all buildings except for particularly frequented areas. Digital accessibility is planned for the learning management system Canvas, for the UTN website, and all other digital systems. To ensure and improve accessibility, UTN will train a group of usability and accessibility students to test UTN's system and provide recommendations for improvement.

### 3. Quality Assurance and Monitoring

In its third year of existence and shortly before the start of the first master's degree program, UTN is developing rapidly. For example, the personnel numbers are increasing, the structure is adapting, and the organization is continuously changing. Therefore, it is important for an educational institution at this stage of development to formulate specific DEI-related goals for the years ahead as well as to develop corresponding structures and processes for quality assurance measures.

**DEI-related target values for employees and students.** In May 2023, a total of 63 people were employed at UTN, nine as academic staff. To date, 67% (42) of all employees are female. We expect the first 30-40 students to begin their studies at UTN in October 2023. With regard to its personnel structure and the projected number of students, UTN has formulated target values for the year 2030. More specifically, UTN has set a goal of filling 35% of all professorships with international researchers by the year 2030. The target value for the proportion of female professors is also set at 35% for 2030. The University aims to have higher representation from women and international participants when it comes to the rest of the academic staff and students, with a goal of 40% by the year 2030. In its annual reports, UTN will collect current data for the above categories to inform specific DEI-related measures.

**Monitoring.** The adoption of this action plan by the Founding Executive Board and its publication on the UTN website mark the beginning of a phase designed to last a maximum of two years. At the earliest possible time, the step-by-step process in this plan will be accompanied by both internal and external quality assurance measures. As a part of that, UTN's strategic controlling team will be entrusted with the task to prepare a data-based DEI progress report. This annual report will summarize the most important DEI-related developments and assess the extent to which the University succeeded in achieving the goals it set for the reporting period. This report will then be submitted to the Steering Board for further discussion. Moreover, DEI-specialists from outside UTN have agreed to provide consultation throughout the step-by-step implementation of this plan as independent advisors. Through the collaboration of internal and external quality assurance measures, the aim will be to work out a DEI strategy that is as comprehensive and durable as possible.

All fields of actions and measures in this plan are the first important steps towards establishing a culture of DEI at UTN. We aim to create a culture of appreciation that makes all university members feel at home and enjoy working and studying: a UTN for all.