

Anti-Discrimination Directive
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The University Board of HTW Berlin issued the following directive on 26 August 2020.

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Preamble

HTW Berlin promotes the goal of being a safe, non-discriminatory and non-violent place to learn, teach and work, characterised by a climate of acceptance and trust as well as a fair, respectful and appreciative organisational culture whose members are in solidarity with one another. The diversity of its members is viewed as a valuable asset and enhancement of the university. Individuality as well as social cohesion are encouraged, so that everyone has the opportunity to develop their particular strengths, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, racial constructions, religion, world view, disability, chronic illness, stage of life, language, sexual and gender identity, social status or responsibility for children and/or dependent relatives.

HTW Berlin promotes a culture of acknowledging and naming discriminatory, abusive or violent behaviour. It encourages its members to take responsibility for themselves and others. All members of HTW Berlin contribute through their behaviour to a work and study climate in which the personal integrity and self-esteem of all employees, students and guests are respected. Those affected by acts of discrimination receive the best possible security and protection. Perpetrators must answer for their actions.

HTW Berlin stresses that it does not tolerate discrimination and assumes responsibility for safeguarding the personal rights of its members, this within the limits of its range of authority.

The present Directive aims to protect against and to reduce potential or emerging instances of discrimination at HTW Berlin. The Directive aims to prevent or eliminate all forms of discrimination and to establish preventive measures and intervention procedures.

§ 1 Area of Application

(1) This Directive applies to all members of the university, namely

- a) individuals who are engaged in an employment relationship with the university,
- b) honorary professors, extraordinary professors and private lecturers,
- c) associate lecturers and guest teachers,
- d) enrolled students and guest students,
- e) individuals who are participating in an educational programme at HTW Berlin,
- f) PhD students,
- g) trainees,
- h) interns.

(2) This Directive applies to all functional areas of the university and to official interactions outside of university facilities and events.

(3) This Directive shall also apply in cases of discrimination by or against third parties on university premises where at least one person is involved in accordance with paragraph 1.

§ 2 Prohibition of Discrimination

(1) No individual referred to in § 1, paras. 1 and 3, above, shall be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, ethnic origin or racial ascription, religion and worldview, a disability, a chronic illness, age, language, sexual and gender identity, social status or responsibility for children and/or dependent relatives.

(2) The explanatory notes to the grounds for discrimination referred to in para. 1 form part of the present Directive and are included in the annex.

(3) In particular, the outcome, i.e. the effect of a decision or action, not the underlying motive that led to the same, shall hereby prove decisive in the classification of an act or behaviour as an instance of discrimination.

(4) Discrimination as understood in this Directive is based on ascriptions or affiliations which are part of socially relevant structures of inequality that systematically lead to disadvantages and have evolved over time. Discrimination occurs both as an individual or interactional act at both structural and institutional levels and must be addressed at all said levels accordingly.

(5) The definition of discrimination laid down in this Directive also recognises that individuals have multiple affiliations or are accorded different ascriptions (intersectionality) and can therefore also be affected by discrimination through the specific interplay of different dimensions (multiple discrimination).

(6) In particularly serious cases, violations of the prohibition of discrimination may constitute a breach of employment contract, service law, civil service law or university law obligations due to their damaging consequences for those affected and their disruptive effect on university operations, and may also constitute criminal offences.

§ 3 Forms of Discrimination

(1) The designation of the forms of discrimination is based on the terminology contained in § 3 of the General Equal Treatment Act (*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz, AGG*) as amended, including the case law based on it, and supplements the same.

(2) **Direct discrimination** is present where one individual is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on one or more of the grounds referred to in § 2. Direct discrimination related to gender also exists in the case of less favourable treatment on the grounds of pregnancy or motherhood and parenthood. Direct discrimination shall also be deemed to exist if the individual committing the discrimination merely assumes that the grounds set out in § 2 exist. Refraining from implementing measures and taking action in order to end discrimination is equivalent to engaging in an act of discrimination, provided that an obligation to take action exists.

(3) **Indirect discrimination** is present where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice is likely to put individuals at a particular disadvantage compared with other individuals on one or more of the grounds referred to in § 2.

(4) **Racial discrimination** is defined as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.” (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, issued by the UNHCR)

(5) **Sexualised discrimination and violence** are understood to be all sexualised behaviours that are unwanted, unwelcome, inappropriate or non-consensual. These include:

- a) lewd remarks and jokes,
- b) derogatory use of language,
- c) gestures and non-verbal comments,
- d) verbal, visual or electronic presentation of sexist or pornographic images,
- e) inappropriate advances, instances of importunity, touching, physical contact, expressions of emotion that are to be understood sexually,
- f) soliciting sexual contact,
- g) coercion for sexual purposes (including indirectly),
- h) behaviour and acts that are prohibited under the law governing sexual offences.

(6) **Harassment** shall be deemed to be discrimination where unwanted conduct related to one or more of the grounds referred to in § 2 is intended to violate, or has the effect of violating the dignity of the person concerned, in particular when this creates an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, degrading or offensive environment. This can manifest itself in bullying or stalking, for example.

(7) **Bullying** constitutes a conflict-laden instance of communication or action between/among individual or multiple participants in which the person affected is in an inferior position, and is repeatedly and systematically excluded or directly or indirectly attacked by an individual or individuals, often over a protracted period of time. This behaviour includes, among other things, the systematic dissemination of discrediting rumours, the systematic denial of information relevant to studies or work, as well as insulting, defamatory and humiliating treatment.

(8) **Stalking** constitutes the unauthorised, persistent pursuit of and spying on others.

(9) An **instruction to discriminate** against an individual equates to an act of discrimination. Such an instruction exists, in particular, if an individual directs another person to behave in a way that discriminates or may discriminate against another individual on one or more of the grounds referred to in § 2.

(10) **Differential treatment** is permissible if, on the basis of the actual or ascribed group-specific characteristics stated in § 2, para. 1, existing disadvantages can be prevented or compensated for by appropriate and reasonable measures (*affirmative action*).

(11) The **classification of behaviour** as problematic is the responsibility of those directly and indirectly affected. A presumption of discrimination also justifies the right to counselling under § 8 and/or the right of complaint under § 9.

§ 4 Duties of the University Board, of Persons with Managerial Responsibilities and of Persons holding Elective Offices of Academic Self-Administration

(1) HTW Berlin shall take all appropriate measures to protect, support and encourage those affected by discrimination to defend themselves. It shall ensure that complainants are not disadvantaged and shall facilitate impartial consulting for all parties involved.

(2) Members of the University Board, persons with managerial responsibilities and persons in elective offices of academic self-administration are responsible for compliance with this Directive:

- a) Through exemplary behaviour and appropriate preventive measures, they are obliged to contribute to the promotion of respectful and non-discriminatory personal interaction, thus helping to protect the integrity of all members of the university.
- b) They shall ensure that existing relationships of dependence in the context of study, research and teaching as well as in the workplace are shaped responsibly and not exploited.
- c) If a serious risk to the individual involved or to other individuals is anticipated, they must involve the next higher superior and/or initiate measures according to § 8 or § 9.

§ 5 Preventive measures

(1) This Directive shall be published and brought to the attention of external parties in an appropriate manner on occasions including the assumption of office, new staff appointments, commencement of studies and the drafting of contracts with external service providers.

(2) HTW Berlin undertakes to employ an **action plan** in order to take the measures necessary to protect against discrimination on the grounds stated in § 2, para. 1. This protection also includes sensitisation and prevention measures. These may include:

- a) the provision of transparent, accessible information and counselling as well as empowerment and support services, particularly for students (e.g. student representatives),
- b) the inclusion of the topic of discrimination in the centralised and decentralised inaugural events for first-year students occurring on and off campus,

- c) the inclusion of the topic of discrimination in compulsory further training courses, particularly those for managers and teachers,
- d) the implementation of further training and supervision for the individuals mentioned in § 8, paras. 3 and 4,
- e) the creation of conditions that enable accessible studies,
- f) the creation of spatial and technical conditions to avoid fear and dangerous situations on the university campuses.

(3) The action plan shall be adopted by the University Board for a period of two years at a time, and shall remain in force until a new plan is adopted. The University Board shall also decide on any additional resources that may be required.

§ 6 Structural Measures

(1) HTW Berlin offers a broad spectrum of points of contact for its various member groups and their concerns, including counselling services, committees, commissions in the sense of officers and representatives, and advocacy groups. This proven infrastructure remains in place and will be better networked in the future for the purpose of carrying out tasks related to anti-discrimination.

(2) After the present Directive comes into force, the University Board shall establish an interdepartmental **Anti-Discrimination Council (ADC; German: ADRat)** that meets on a regular basis. Its members shall include the member of the University Board responsible for anti-discrimination, a representative of the Staff Council, the full-time Equal Opportunities Officer for Women, the Disability Representative, at least two representatives of the student body and at least five other individuals from different areas and member groups of the university. Members of the ADC are appointed by the University Board. The term of office is two years. Re-appointment is possible, as is dismissal if a member violates the rules of the present regulation. In the event that an individual leaves, they shall be replaced by another person as soon as possible. Internal and external guests may attend the meetings of the ADC upon invitation.

(3) In addition to performing networking activities related the counselling infrastructure of HTW Berlin, the ADC shall be tasked with raising awareness of and contributing to the dismantling of taboos within the university. It shall draw up the proposal for the two-year action plan in accordance with § 5, para. 2, taking into account the experience gained from the counselling process and the results of reporting and evaluation (§ 13). It shall advise committees and commissions as well as management staff. It reports annually to the Students' Union (AStA), the University Board and the Academic Senate.

(4) HTW Berlin will establish an **Anti-Discrimination Office and create anti-discrimination management processes**. The aforementioned tasks result, inter alia, from:

- a) § 5 (Preventive Measures) - the development and implementation of the action plan as well as the organisation and implementation of events and further training for students, employees and management staff of HTW Berlin, in particular,

- b) § 7 (Reporting Instances of Discrimination) - in particular, documenting and monitoring reported violations, in particular,
- c) § 8 (Right to Counselling and Counselling Services) - guidance for those seeking advice as well as networking with internal and external university counselling services, conducting initial consultations, individual and group counselling as well as conflict management for all member groups of HTW Berlin, in particular,
- d) § 10 (Complaints Procedure)
- e) § 12 (Elimination of Indirect Discrimination) and
- f) § 13 (Reporting and Evaluation).

Concrete stipulations in this regard will be made separately. Until then, this function shall be performed by the President and officers to be appointed at their discretion.

(5) The University Board shall bear the cost of any legal advice for actors of HTW Berlin in order to ensure external legal support for complaints procedures in contentious cases.

§ 7 Reporting Instances of Discrimination

(1) Alleged violations of the prohibition of discrimination pursuant to § 2 may be reported by means of an electronic form, which can be accessed easily via the HTW Berlin website. Complaints may be lodged either anonymously or by name, either by those affected or by witnesses.

§ 8 Right to Counselling and Counselling Services

(1) HTW Berlin offers both its members and third parties within the meaning of § 1 who feel affected by discrimination within the meaning of § 2 the right to seek and take advantage of counselling. Individuals who exercise their right to counselling, as well as those who support the individuals concerned, must not experience any personal, study-related or professional disadvantages.

(2) The central counselling office in cases of discrimination is the Anti-Discrimination Office of HTW Berlin in accordance with § 6, para. 4.

(3) The counselling centres for students in cases of discrimination (for initial consultations and referral consultations) are:

- a) the general Study Advisory Service,
- b) the full-time Equal Opportunities Officer for Women, the part-time Equal Opportunities Officers for Women of the faculties and the central organisational units,
- c) the Chronic Conditions and Disabilities Officer and, if necessary, other officers,

- d) the members of the Faculty Student Councils and the Students' Union (AStA), student members of the Faculty Councils,
- e) other officers to be appointed by the President as necessary.

(4) The following advocacy groups and officers shall act as counselling services in cases of discrimination (for initial consultations and referral consultations) for all other member groups:

- a) the Staff Council,
- b) the full-time Equal Opportunities Officer for Women, the part-time Equal Opportunities Officers for Women of the faculties and the central organisational units,
- c) the Disability Representative,
- d) other officers, as necessary.

(5) The counselling services are there to give those affected by discrimination an opportunity to speak and be heard, and to inform them of options for support as well as elucidating the complaints procedure. They also refer individuals to external counselling services if necessary. If the discrimination takes place in the context of a study-related internship, affected students can also contact the counselling services. They may lodge a complaint and forward it to the Complaints Office in accordance with § 10, para. 1. The counselling services are obliged to communicate the options and limits of the range of services offered in a clear and comprehensible manner, and to maintain strict confidentiality.

(6) HTW Berlin cooperates closely with external counselling services as regards the grounds for discrimination referred to in § 2, para. 1.

(7) The individual concerned can also avail themselves of counselling services with the involvement of a trusted third party in order to preserve their anonymity. They are free to make use of further internal and external counselling services at any time.

(8) The counsellors are bound to professional secrecy, from which they can only be released by the individuals concerned. Possible limits on confidentiality are made transparent in the counselling consultation. All steps are taken in consultation with the individuals concerned as well as with those supporting them, where appropriate. Possible further steps include:

- a) accompaniment to further counselling sessions,
- b) recommending professional mediation by a neutral third party
- c) contact facilitation to a psychosocial counselling service,
- d) initiation of the complaints procedure.

(9) Urgent cases are conceivable which may make it advisable for the counselling services to exchange necessary expertise within the university in accordance with § 8, paras. 3 and 4. They are obliged to send a

designated staff member to a joint appointment within 10 days on the initiative of the respectively responsible counselling service. The aim is to be able to provide the individual seeking advice with the information and assistance they require as quickly and effectively as possible.

(10) The counselling services may, with the consent of the individuals concerned, strive for a transparent process of conflict resolution within the framework of their counselling (e.g. the person implicated issues an apology to the individual concerned) in the event that those concerned prefer not to initiate an official complaints procedure.

§ 9 Right of Complaint and Complaints Office

(1) The members of HTW Berlin as well as third parties within the meaning of § 1 who feel affected by instances of discrimination within the meaning of § 2 have the right of complaint.

(2) The complaints procedure serves to inform the Anti-Discrimination Office to examine the allegations and, if necessary, to initiate further measures against the person or institution implicated.

(3) HTW Berlin shall ensure that no personal, study-related or professional disadvantages ensue for the individual concerned or, if applicable, for the person supporting the individual concerned as a result of exercising their right of complaint, as a result of the approach adopted by the university.

(4) In the event that an implicated person initiates legal proceedings against a member of the university named in § 8, paras. 3 or 4, the latter may be granted support for legal protection measures in criminal or civil matters by the employer in the form of an interest-free loan upon application in accordance with the Implementing Regulations on Legal Protection Measures in Civil and Criminal Matters for Employees of the State of Berlin (*AV Rechtsschutz*) of 18 May 2016 under certain conditions, the existence of which must be verified by the employer.

(5) The Complaints Office within the meaning of § 13, para. 1 of the General Equal Treatment Act (*AGG*) is the University Board. It may delegate the tasks associated with a formal complaint in accordance with § 9 to a member of staff of the Complaints Office or other suitable offices within the university.

§ 10 Complaints Procedure

(1) HTW Berlin is establishing a Complaints Office. This is responsible for complaints relating to violations of § 2 of the present Directive. It shall also constitute a Complaints Office within the meaning of § 13, para. 1 of the General Equal Treatment Act (*AGG*).

(2) Staff appointments to the Complaints Office are made by the University Board. The team shall include at least one individual identifying as female; in addition, diversity is taken into account in the composition of the staff.

(3) The Complaints Office must be easily accessible for all members of HTW Berlin. It shall ensure confidentiality and the protection of the legitimate interests of the parties at all times during the

complaints procedure. It shall carry out the formal procedure unless special responsibilities are provided for therein.

(4) Complaints may be made to the Complaints Office in writing or verbally.

(5) Complaints may also be lodged anonymously. HTW Berlin provides a suitable, accessible technical option for this purpose. If the complaint is lodged anonymously, the individual making the complaint waives the right to communicate the result, and the procedural steps provided for in § 10 paras. 6, 7, 8, 10, 12 can only be implemented to a limited extent. However, the obligation of HTW Berlin to examine necessary measures remains in place.

(6) The Complaints Office shall conduct an interview with the complainant, during which the complaint is documented. At the request of the complainant, a person of their confidence may take part in the interview. The documentation shall be submitted to the complainant for review and subsequent signature.

(7) The Complaints Office shall give the person against whom the complaint is directed (person implicated) the opportunity to respond to said complaint in writing within a reasonable period of time. On this basis, the Complaints Office shall conduct a personal interview with the person implicated in a timely manner, taking into account any time limits set by law or otherwise, but not exceeding one month of receipt of the complaint. If they so wish, a person of their confidence may also take part in the interview. The Complaints Office shall document the statement of the person implicated.

(8) The Complaints Office shall compile the facts of the case. To this end, it may involve responsible persons from the respective affected areas, particularly in the event that immediate measures are necessary to prevent discrimination. The Complaints Office can also interview other persons as witnesses and draw on the knowledge of (external) experts. In order to protect the general rights of privacy of the individuals involved, the group of persons consulted should be kept as small as possible. The Complaints Office shall document the facts of the case.

(9) The Complaints Office shall examine the facts of the case, document the results of the examination, inform the President of its findings via the Chancellor, if applicable, and propose further action and, if necessary, penalties in accordance with § 11.

(10) After further steps have been confirmed by the University Board, the Complaints Office informs the complainant as well as the implicated person of the results of the review within ten working days and documents the same in writing. If a complaint is rejected, the individual lodging the complaint must be provided with grounds for its rejection.

(11) The President or the Chancellor shall decide on further measures and possible consequences in accordance with § 11 of the present Directive. These shall be documented.

(12) The implementation of a complaints procedure on the basis of the present Directive does not exclude consequences under labour or employment law as well as criminal prosecution. In this case, the University Board may suspend or terminate the complaints procedure.

§ 11 Penalties

(1) Depending on the severity of the offence, the following penalties may be imposed on employees and associate lecturers of HTW Berlin:

- a) a corrective interview,
- b) a verbal and/or written instruction/admonishment; a written warning,
- c) the initiation of disciplinary proceedings,
- d) the compulsory participation in further training on anti-discrimination,
- e) the exclusion from the use of (certain) internal university services and facilities,
- f) the transfer or relocation to another workplace or location within the university,
- g) the withdrawal of a teaching position,
- h) ordinary/extraordinary termination (without notice),
- i) the bringing of criminal charges.

(2) Depending on the severity of the offence, the following measures may be taken against students and all those named under § 1, para. 1 who are not employed by HTW Berlin:

- a) a corrective interview,
- b) a verbal/written instruction/admonishment,
- c) the initiation of measures against violations of § 16, para. 2 of the Berlin Higher Education Act (BerlHG): threat of exmatriculation, exclusion from the use of university facilities, exclusion from participation in individual courses for up to one semester, exmatriculation.

Additionally, the bringing of

- d) criminal charges.

§ 12 Elimination of Indirect Discrimination

(1) All regulations issued by HTW Berlin in the form of official information circulars, agreements, contracts, forms, instructions, etc. (University Regulations, Framework Regulations, Study Programme Regulations, collective agreements, service agreements, work instructions, etc.) will be checked to see whether they contain provisions or regulations that contradict this Directive in terms of content or language and thus indirectly enable conduct in accordance with § 2.

(2) In the event that a provision or regulation is found to contain a form of indirect discrimination without this being justified in accordance with the provisions of the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) or the present Directive, the University Board and the competent offices shall work within the framework of their legal possibilities to amend these provision or regulations in such a way that the instance of discrimination is eliminated without this amendment negatively exacerbating the position of members of the university.

§ 13 Reporting and Evaluation

(1) Quality assurance is guaranteed via the following measures as a minimum:

- a) those who have received counselling or lodged a complaint are given the opportunity to provide feedback by means of an anonymised survey.
- b) all counselling services provided at HTW Berlin, and the Complaints Office, collate case numbers both on the basis of the number of cases and as regards the grounds for discrimination according to § 2, para. 1 in anonymised form and in compliance with all current data protection regulations. This also includes those alleged violations of the prohibition of discrimination that are transmitted by means of the reporting form.
- c) anti-discrimination counselling and complaints procedures at HTW Berlin are subject to regular monitoring (evaluation of feedback forms from persons seeking advice and complainants, evaluation of anonymous complaints with regard to accumulation of complaints relating to specific individuals or organisational units, effect of preventive measures, etc.)
- d) if necessary, the Anti-Discrimination Directive and the action plan will be modified and/or further appropriate measures will be initiated.

§ 14 Entry into Force

This Directive comes into force on the day after its publication as a Circular published by HTW Berlin.

Annex: Explanatory Notes to § 2 Grounds for Discrimination

The grounds for discrimination stated in § 2, para. 1, are explained in the following, taking account of current academic discourse in the process. It is important to note that discrimination is often not merely one-dimensional, i.e. not exclusively related to a single category, but exists and is experienced multi-dimensionally, in complex forms (additive, intertwined).

Gender is created in an interplay of biological, physical and social factors. The fact that women and men exist, and that they are perceived as two different groups of people (theory of binary gender) is the result of historically influenced, culturally specific norms, practices and structures. These determine what is considered “natural” and “normal”. Genders are formed in connection with this. The characteristic “gender” includes every – socially constructed – distinction between man and woman as well as the category “diverse” according to the Act on the Amendment of the Information to be Entered in the Register of Births of 18 December 2018 (Federal Law Gazette (BGBl. I p. 2635).

The characteristic **ethnic origin** refers to the origin of a person from a group of people who are connected by certain socio-cultural criteria, e.g. a common language, geographical origin, shared traditions or social conventions. To avoid ethnic essentialism, the term should be interpreted broadly.

In derogation from § 1, para. 2 of the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG), the Directive shall replace the term “race” with “**racial constructions**” and “**racial discrimination**”. In this way, the unintentional recognition of the existence of racial constructions associated with the essentialising term “race” is avoided.

The characteristic **religion** comprises a belief system with transcendental references, which includes the belief in certain statements explaining the world, human origins and the purpose of human life. The number of adherents and the social relevance of the group are not decisive, but it must be an established religious community on the basis of its external image and spiritual content. Discrimination can also occur when someone is discriminated against on the grounds of their atheist beliefs or indifference to religious issues.

A non-religious interpretation of meaning with inner-worldly, immanent references falls under the characteristic **worldview**. The concept of worldview must be measured against the same comprehensive standard as religious belief. The characteristic does not pertain to short-term political ideas of correctness; rather, a worldview must constitute firm convictions that have a certain degree of sustainability, seriousness, coherence and meaning. Membership of a community is not important here; inner conviction can constitute a worldview in and of itself. Only worldviews that are in harmony with the free democratic basic order are included.

The definition of the characteristic **disability** is based on a human rights-oriented, socio-dynamic understanding of the term: people are considered disabled if they suffer with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may prevent them from participating fully, effectively and equally in society.

A **chronically ill** individual suffers from a physical or mental condition that requires medical treatment for a prolonged period of time and regularly and significantly interferes with said individual's normal lifestyle. Chronic conditions are characterised by constraints likely to be of long duration. Discrimination on the grounds of a chronic illness within the meaning of the present Directive is deemed to exist in the event that the illness is accompanied by social avoidance and stigmatisation towards the person with the illness. Chronic illness cannot be clearly differentiated from disability in all cases. Both characteristics are equal in their own right.

The use of the term **stage of life** instead of age underlines the fact that it is not only important to protect older or younger people from discrimination, but that any unjustified disadvantage linked to age is included.

The characteristic **language** includes discriminatory acts that may also be linked to the verbal or written communication style of the individual concerned. These include, among others, pronunciation and accent.

The term **sexual identity** refers to the emotional, physical and/or sexual attraction or practices regarding a person's gender. In addition to homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality, this also includes omnisexuality and asexuality. **Gender identity** encompasses physical and social gender and is based on one's own sense of gender. A person's gender identity may differ – particularly in the case of transgender people – from the gender assigned at birth. A person's gender identity also includes gender expression, i.e. the way a person dresses, speaks or moves and thus expresses gender.

Social status describes the effective assignment of a social position within a system of social, i.e. socially inscribed and historically evolved rankings and hierarchies. The assignment of a specific social status is thus a product of a macrosocial discourse, which results in an unequal distribution of life opportunities via mechanisms including categorisation, stereotyping, reduction and hierarchisation. Among others, the following (largely socio-economic) factors co-determine a person's social status: education level, income, employment status, occupation, clothing and physical appearance. Social status is "inherited" and imposed on an individual externally via social structures. It cannot be determined primarily through one's own activities, nor be changed at any time.

The **assumption of responsibility for children and/or dependent relatives** is not tied solely to biological parenthood or kinship. A modern, inclusive concept of family is supported in consequence.