

Outline of Measures regarding Gender Equality and Diversity at BIFOLD

Introduction

No one should be discriminated against in the science system on the basis of gender, origin, age, or state of health. The Berlin Institute for the Foundation of Learning and Data (BIFOLD) is committed to this objective and is working towards fostering equality of all genders and the promotion of diversity among its members. In this way, BIFOLD aims not only to meet common requirements for research institutes but also to increase its attractiveness as a workplace for the best young scientists as well as senior researchers. This will allow BIFOLD to foster its innovative potential and continue its top-level research.

The following outline is based on the principles above. It offers concrete proposals and measures through which BIFOLD will foster diversity and gender equality within the institution and among its members at all career levels.

Objectives

To promote equality and diversity, BIFOLD has set itself the following goals:

- 1) BIFOLD will ensure that both the promotion of diversity and gender equality become an integral part of the institute's DNA.
- 2) BIFOLD will engage to increase the number of female professors at the institute. For this purpose, suitable programs will be made available.
- 3) BIFOLD will engage to increase the proportion of female guest researchers in the Grace Hopper visiting program.
- 4) BIFOLD aims at achieving a higher proportion of women and maintain it through all academic positions.
- 5) BIFOLD will raise awareness among its staff and within the BIFOLD research groups by offering trainings to this end.
- 6) BIFOLD will create a contact point (Persons of Trust) who can mediate in the event of disregard towards principles of equality and diversity (as well as Good Research Practice) within the institute. The Persons of Trust will offer low-threshold, confidential advice.
- 7) The BIFOLD office will actively contribute to the reduction of possible barriers for all BIFOLD members (e.g. language barriers, measures for balancing family and career).
- 8) BIFOLD will build a network with existing actors and counseling centers both at the TU Berlin and externally, in order to make use of existing structures, courses, and contact points for all BIFOLD members.

- 9) BIFOLD will offer a network for women researchers and provide corresponding training and mentoring opportunities.
- 10) BIFOLD will continue supporting measures and programs that appeal to young women working in the fields of Machine Learning and Big Data Management research.

Planned projects and measures

The following initiatives are planned in order to achieve the goals above. They will be implemented starting January 2024:

Increase gender equality and diversity among BIFOLD employees.

The following measures have been developed to promote an increase in the number of female professors, guest professors and scientific staff at BIFOLD:

- To increase the number of female professors, BIFOLD will directly address female candidates and encourage them to apply for these positions, adapting job postings to both directly target and appeal to more female applicants.
- Furthermore, BIFOLD will make use of further support programs as the “Berliner Chancengleichheitsprogramm” or the [Alexander von Humboldt-Professur](#) to acquire further professorships aimed specifically at top-level female researchers.
- The diverse BIFOLD visiting programs will promote women at all career levels since BIFOLD aims at increasing the number of female guest professors coming to the institute.
- To further increase the number of female scientific staff at all levels, measures will be taken to encourage excellent female students to advance in their scientific careers and to support young female researchers.
- Excellent female Post Doc researchers will be encouraged to apply for the lead of a BIFOLD Junior Research Group.
- The BIFOLD office will regularly monitor external programs that support women in AI, bringing them to the attention of BIFOLD researchers and encouraging them to apply. This initiative will specifically target female postdocs and early career female researchers.
- Research group leaders will be sensitized towards building their groups according to gender-balanced and diverse criteria. All persons responsible for hiring must undergo adequate anti-bias training in advance to identify and avoid subconscious biases against gender, origin, or other discriminatory factors in appointment processes.
- All BIFOLD PhD students will receive mandatory general anti-bias training. (Participation in this training is optional for all other BIFOLD members.)
- The descriptions for job postings will be modified to appeal to more female applicants and recruitment outside of German-speaking countries will be increased.

- BIFOLD will increase its attractiveness as an employer of women by introducing measures to reconcile family and career and making these posts public beyond the context of academia (see below for details).
- The BIFOLD office actively supports direct communication with the administration of TU Berlin with regards to mediating/eradicating obstacles for BIFOLD-staff. Contact with the relevant departments of the BIFOLD office can be established via the team assistants of the ML and DM research groups or the two Persons of Trust.
- BIFOLD will openly publish its measures on gender equality and diversity, demonstrating its commitment to gender equality, diversity and good work-life balance for present-day and future researchers.

Contact Point for Gender Equality and Diversity (Persons of Trust)

In 2024, BIFOLD will establish a contact point (Persons of Trust) for BIFOLD-members who have been potentially affected by discrimination. This contact will work to ensure that the principles of gender equality and diversity are observed and that no discrimination has taken place at BIFOLD. Persons who feel discriminated against will have access to an anonymous initial consultation. The Persons of Trust will also provide further information on additional networks and resources (see below)

This contact point will consist of two Persons of Trust. In filling these positions, attention will be paid to gender parity.

- The first two Persons of Trust will be nominated by the directors.
- Once BIFOLD is officially established as an institute, the two positions will be elected by the BIFOLD members. The election will be coupled with the elections of the institute council.
- The Persons of Trust can be contacted by members of every status group working at BIFOLD as well as by BIFOLD Fellows.
- The Persons of Trust are independent and are not obliged to report on their work to the institute directors or any other BIFOLD member.
- The Persons of Trust are impartial. When conflicts-of-interest occur, they will ask each other or an equivalent representative at TU Berlin to step in.
- The Persons of Trust will help with confidential counseling in cases of conflict or alleged research misconduct. The information shared during a counseling session may only be shared with others or used further with the prior consent of the person seeking advice. The information must be anonymized before it is shared with others or archived.
- The first aim of the internal BIFOLD Persons of Trust will be to mediate and search for solutions at the early stages of a conflict. Where this is not possible the Person of Trust will engage to enable transparent investigation of allegations, take measures to protect the person concerned and to involve the relevant bodies at TU Berlin, should the person seeking advice wish this. A relevant contact point could be:

<https://www.tu.berlin/gleichstellung/beratung/sexualisierte-diskriminierung-und-gewalt>

Further support for women via networking, empowerment, and communication

The BIFOLD office will maintain and initiate contact with existing actors, institutions, and networks at the TU Berlin and in the Berlin area to make their services easily accessible to BIFOLD members (see below for further information on these actors). In addition, information about these services will be forwarded and brought to the attention of BIFOLD members in a targeted manner. The following specific projects and measures will contribute to networking and empowerment at BIFOLD:

- To offer scientific and career mentoring BIFOLD will connect with existing initiatives and programs as e.g. the ProFil mentoring program BIFOLD commits to support female researchers at qualifying career levels (doctoral students, postdocs, and junior professors) in expanding their skill sets, and enabling them to build new networks. BIFOLD will also invite advanced female professors from other institutions in particular to network with other female researchers at BIFOLD.
- Starting mid-2024, BIFOLD will establish a (virtual) regular meeting regarding AI for and to promote women in the field of AI research. This meeting will offer women opportunities for networking and empowerment. This meeting will also provide a platform for organizing lectures and training sessions aimed specifically at female researchers in AI. For this purpose, BIFOLD will try to establish a cooperation with [Women in AI](#).
- BIFOLD will keep on increasing the visibility of its female researchers via targeted external communications.

Support for families

- BIFOLD will develop guidelines and best practice recommendations for family-friendly work in research at the Institute. These guidelines can also be referred to in job postings and application procedures.
- For increased compatibility between work and family, BIFOLD will actively support childcare issues in cooperation with the family office (Familienbüro) and other services of TU Berlin.
 - The Family Office offers fixed childcare as a component during recurring events or flexible childcare for BIFOLD members.
 - The Family Office can offer emergency childcare, which can be fully covered by BIFOLD funds in cases of unforeseen important work meetings.
 - The [TU Berlin's contact point](#) can answer questions about childcare.
 - At TU Berlin two daycare centers ([Marchstraße 8](#) and [Sigmunds Hof 17 A](#)) offer free daycare for young children.
 - The umbrella organization [Berliner Kinder- und Schülerläden](#) offers a website with an overview of available places.
 - If necessary, in cooperation with the TU Berlin, BIFOLD guest researchers can be provided with reserved placements for their children in daycare centers.

- In cooperation with the TU Berlin's Family Office, BIFOLD also supports members who are caring for relatives by offering flexible working time models. [The care support point at Ernst-Reuter-Platz](#) is also a point of contact for family caregivers.
- The TU-financed digital platform [voiiio](#) offers a comprehensive range of videos, coaching and activities in Berlin for parents and family caregivers. BIFOLD members can access this free of charge as TU members.
- Equal opportunity funds will be made available for childcare at events and appointments.
- BIFOLD will offer free childcare for scientific events scheduled in the evening.
- The establishment of any new institute building will ensure sufficient parent-child working spaces as well as nappy-changing facilities. The latter are already provided in the existing buildings.

Investing in future female expertise in Machine Learning & Big Data (BIFOLD programs for schools)

- BIFOLD will support initiatives that enable teenagers, especially young women, to gain expertise in Machine Learning and Data Management. Together with the programs such as "KI macht Schule", "DEin Labor" or "Starcode organization" BIFOLD will establish contact with other schools to give young students hands-on experiences in Machine Learning and Data Management tools to promote interest in these lines of research. BIFOLD PhD students and postdocs will be invited to support these programs by giving workshops in coding.
 - Together with "KI macht Schule" BIFOLD will offer training on how to present yourself in front of a class.
 - Furthermore, special attention will be paid to the branding of these activities (communication on social media, slides, presentation in class) to make BIFOLD as an actor visible.
- With well well-established partners as e.g. BBAW and Urania events for high schools can be planned which present the work of an advanced BIFOLD researcher to teenagers interested in IT.
- BIFOLD will also offer its participation in the TU's annual program for the event "Girl's Day".