Austrian
Development
Cooperation

appear

Austrian Partnership Programme
in Higher Education and Research
for Development

Diversity Strategy

1. Introduction

The conception of measures for promoting women and targeted activities for strengthening gender mainstreaming at higher education institutions are still part of the APPEAR programme and are considered when selecting the projects. A broader definition of target groups is also necessary in order to comply with international standards and to broaden discussions about the rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups. Although DANIDA (Danish International Development Agency) observed a certain "mainstreaming fatigue" – meaning fatigue from addressing and conceiving gender mainstreaming measures for projects – in a preliminary study for devising the new Gender and Diversity Rights Strategy in 2013, it is still asserted that development cooperation funds cannot be issued in a manner that disregards gender, and therefore there is no alternative to gender mainstreaming.

ADA and the APPEAR Office continue to support mainstreaming and anti-discrimination of disadvantaged groups to make a positive contribution in this regard and build confidence. The information and support services offered by the APPEAR Office are thus being supplemented with diversity expertise in order to provide optimal support for the projects. Applicants and project partners are informed of potential solutions, and the ability to integrate this cross-cutting topic is strengthened.

2. Concept of diversity

Diversity is synonymous with variety, difference and plurality. Krell identifies two types of diversity: diversity through differences, and diversity through differences and similarities[1]. The latter concept is also related to intersectionality, i.e. the potential interconnection of multiple categories of inequality that lead to discrimination and adversity. For example, it is possible for someone to be discriminated against and excluded not just because of their gender, but because of their health – the keywords here being inclusion and people with disabilities – or nationality. There is disagreement whether visible or less visible categories of (in-)equality are to be included. That is why the concept of diversity used in this strategy goes beyond pure diversity management, which focuses on human resource management structures, while also including it.

3. Diversity Management

Diversity management has become an inherent component of the organisational culture and development at European higher education institutions. It is being discussed in various ways in different countries.

Diversity management at higher education institutions has its roots in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, and in human resource management. The goal is to detect discriminatory exclusion criteria that limit access to higher education, and work on systematically removing these obstacles. Teachers and students should not be viewed exclusively and separately from other groups, but rather

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[1] Cf. Krell, Gertraude (2004): Managing Diversity und Gender Mainstreaming: ein Konzeptvergleich. In: *Sozialwissenschaften und Berufspraxis (SuB)*, Vol. 27/4, S. 367–376, here p. 367.

the area of teaching should be more inclusive and jointly coordinated. Intersectionality – the multiple interconnections of discrimination characteristics – is reflected on and, instead of a deficit perspective, attention is drawn to potentials and resources so that not only difference, but also similarities and the potential of students and teachers become visible.

The underlying systematic and organisational conditions, as well as intentional or unintentional mechanisms of institutional discrimination, play a critical role. Power dynamics at higher education institutions must be recognised and reduced through reflexive and systematic processes.

Accessibility, anti-discrimination and equality overlap and influence one another. This equates to a broadly formulated approach to diversity that, by definition, does not exclusively address certain social groups by nationality, sex, etc. Accessibility is primarily geared towards persons with disabilities, as the physical (e.g. lack of ramps, lifts, etc.) and infrastructural barriers (e.g. lack of resources in Braille, technical devices for persons with vision or hearing impairment) or unintended structural barriers in education (e.g. due date for submitting tests and papers) are obstacles for many students with disabilities. A comprehensive diversity approach allows for reflection of the underlying inequalities at the national and institutional level, as well as the conception, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and development of countermeasures. Not only at the personal level do the parties involved benefit from the promotion of diversity, but rather institutions can also make use of the heterogeneous make-up of teaching staff, personnel and students due to the various potentials, strengths and capabilities that this provides. These parties can strengthen one another and ultimately enrich the composition of the institution itself. Experiences from APPEAR I and APPEAR II have shown that some institutions in the partner countries are already sensitised to diversity-related issues. This makes it possible to learn from these perspectives and implementations, and to engage in an exchange of knowledge between North and South.

4. Disability mainstreaming

Disability mainstreaming, to which the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) is bound, and which has become more significant through the tenet of "leave no one behind", must still be followed. The pursuit of inclusive development and education, and the creation of inclusive and accessible higher education, require a comprehensive approach that considers the rights and needs of people with disabilities, and not just on the development agenda. Disability mainstreaming is thus an empowering and urgently required process for achieving this goal. The ADA defines this as follows:

"Disability mainstreaming, that is, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in DC, aims at helping eliminate barriers, promote gender equality and prevent discrimination so that persons with and without disabilities can benefit equally from development cooperation measures."[2]

Disability mainstreaming is thus the inclusion of people with disabilities, or the inclusion of a perspective that considers people with disabilities and, above all, does not create further barriers. It is

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[2] ADA/Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights (2013): Persons with disabilities. Inclusion: human right and mandate. Guideline on including persons with disabilities in ADC project cycle management. P. 6. Online at: https://www.entwicklung.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Publikationen/Handbuecher/Menschen_mB/Manual_Persons_with_disabilities.pdf

supposed to remove obstacles, promote equality and prevent discrimination so that people with and without disabilities can equally benefit from development processes and partnerships. Mainstreaming should not be seen as the final goal, but rather as a process for achieving equality.[3]

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), around one billion people worldwide live with some sort of disability. 80% of these people live in developing countries.[4] One cause of this in the Global South is the vicious cycle of poverty and disability. Poverty can both cause and be caused by disability. Additional causes in the Global South include natural disasters and the effects of war and armed conflict.

The APPEAR Office will emphatically inform and sensitise APPEAR partnerships to the rights of people with disabilities and consider this when evaluating projects. The use of disability mainstreaming in academic partnerships and in the consideration of master's and PhD scholarship recipients with disabilities – provided they possess equal qualification – is considered a positive measure in compliance with the tenets of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Diversity perspectives in the APPEAR programme

How are people of different sexes, culturally and linguistically diverse individuals and social groups, people with disabilities and other disadvantaged or marginalised groups reached and considered in partnerships, and how is their participation ensured?

Poverty and inequality manifest in different ways among the genders, between adults and children, between people with and without disabilities, etc., and can be reinforced by various intersectionalities such as heritage, age, class, and others.

The APPEAR Diversity Strategy shall serve as a prerequisite so as to detect gender inequality during every programme and project phase, and to recognise the diversity among the population and especially among the programme's target demographics.

Various roles (and ascriptions), perspectives, expectations, needs, etc., shall make it possible to interpret the strategy and its potential implementation measures in a variety of ways specific to the given situation. This also addresses the need to consider beneficiaries who do and do not attend higher education. The tenet "leave no one behind" and the inclusive approach for higher education partnerships also demands the consideration of another defined impact that goes beyond the limits of tertiary educational institutions. A contribution to reducing poverty and achieving the SDGs is only possible with an inclusive development paradigm that does not exclude or overlook persons on the basis of inequality criteria.

A dialogue, redistribution of resources, definition of priorities and a change in organisational structure are all required so that project partners (and institutions) can implement relevant measures for achieving equality and diversity in their own work and can consider social and cultural norms and values with the underlying organisational systems. Strategies must be institutionalised and measures

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[3] Cf. Miller, Carol/Albert, Bill (2005): Mainstreaming disability in development: Lessons from gender mainstreaming. Online at: http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Outputs/Disability/RedPov_gender.pdf

[4] Cf. WHO: Better health for people with disabilities. Online at:
https://www.who.int/disabilities/facts/Infographic_en_pdf.pdf?ua=1

evaluated and assessed. One multi-year programme phase and one funding programme are not sufficient. Despite everything, a dialogue should be initiated, awareness raising should take place and small formulated goals should be considered.

In keeping with the quite open nature of the APPEAR programme with regard to the thematic focus areas of the programme and partnerships, and the possibility of conceiving projects focusing on teaching, research and management with the specified tender guidelines and thematic focus areas, activities relating to the promotion of diversity and which are of relevance to the respective project and region should be encouraged.

A Disability Mainstreaming Manual was created during the second APPEAR programme phase in 2016 which introduces applicants and project partners to the issue and presents concrete opportunities for implementation. Firstly, the most important and most frequently cited key words and concepts relating to disability mainstreaming and inclusion were explained. Secondly, a range of possible fields of action for APPEAR projects were presented, questions on the creation of project applications were defined, and further links to information and online tools were compiled. The manual was created with special emphasis on higher education partnership projects in development cooperation. The list of information, examples and tools is by no means complete or relevant to each partnership. Applicants and project partners are encouraged to conceive customised mainstreaming activities suitable for their specific context, and to devise these with support from the APPEAR Office, depending on the specific project design.[5] Based on experience from the second programme phase, this shall now be supplemented with the concept of diversity, whereby the concept of inclusion remains of central importance and will not be replaced. As part of the project conception and implementation, applicants and project partners shall expand questions from the Disability Mainstreaming Manual with a broader concept of diversity and adjust their respective project context accordingly.

This manual shall show the project partners that diversity perspectives can still be considered in the project even after the conception and approval of an application. Applicants in particular should be encouraged during the conception phase to consult the manual or strategy, and to conceive and budget activities in their specific regional and institutional context.

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[5] Cf. APPEAR (2016): Disability Mainstreaming. Practical Information and Advice. Online at:
https://appear.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/appear.at/application/guidelines_strategies/disability_mainstreaming_appear.pdf