

# Promotion of Gender Equality at the University of Muenster's Department of Information Systems

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**Abstract** The article provides an overview of the work done at the University of Muenster (WWU), Department of Information Systems (DIS) within the Horizon 2020 EQUAL-IST project (“Gender Equality Plans for Information Sciences and Technology Research Institutions”). During the project, the existing at DIS challenges related to gender equality, diversity, and work-family balance were revealed, the objectives to address these challenges were set, and the interventions to achieve these objectives were designed, implemented, as well as continuously assessed and refined. This article provides insights into the course of project implementation at WWU, achieved outcomes, and sustainability plan.

**Keywords** Gender equality. Gender Equality Plan. Interventions. Diversity. Inclusion. Structural change. Sustainability. Information Systems. Research organisation.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Approach. – 3 Implemented Interventions and Resistances Faced. – 4 Project Sustainability and Conclusion. 4.1 DIS Sustainability Plan. – 4.2 SBE Sustainability plan.

## 1 Introduction

EQUAL-IST (“Gender Equality Plans for Information Sciences and Technology Research Institutions”, <https://equal-ist.eu>, <https://www.uni-muenster.de/forschungaz/project/10219?lang=en>) was an international project funded by the European Commission within the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme (<https://ec.europa.eu/>

programmes/horizon2020/en). The project started in June 2016 and was successfully completed in July 2019. The project was aimed at *introducing structural changes to enhance gender equality, diversity, and work-family balance* at the six participating Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Information Sciences and Technology (IST) research institutions. It has been demonstrated that ICT and IST belong to the fields, where gender inequalities at all levels can be observed (Eurostat Press Office 2017; E. Gorbacheva, Beekhuyzen, vom Brocke, Becker 2018).

The EQUAL-IST project was focused on the design and implementation of tailored Gender Equality Plans (GEPs). A GEP is “a set of actions aiming at: (i) conducting impact assessment / audits of procedures and practices to identify gender bias; (ii) identifying and implementing innovative strategies to correct any bias; and (iii) setting targets and monitoring progress via indicators” (European Commission 2012, 13). Within the EQUAL-IST project the tailored GEPs were designed in a participatory manner involving a wider audience of staff members (both academic and non-academic), students, and decision makers. This participatory approach was supported by the online crowdsourcing platform, called CrowdEquality (<http://www.crowdequality.eu>), which was developed and applied within the project (E. Gorbacheva, Moutzi, Stein 2019; Gorbacheva, Barann 2017) as well as other challenges related to gender equity, can be addressed with the help of IT-enabled idea crowdsourcing. A systematic literature review was conducted to understand how the topic of gender equity promotion via collaboratively used IT artefacts has been addressed in extant research. Insights from the literature review, overview of existing related IT artefacts, and iterative discussions with scholars in the IT field have resulted in a set of requirements to the idea crowdsourcing platform aimed at the promotion of gender equity in IT research institutions. These requirements were analysed further and could be categorised into those specific for the target platform and those relevant also for other idea crowdsourcing platforms (with or without further adaptation).

This article is focused on the interventions towards higher gender equality, diversity, and work-family balance (‘interventions’ hereafter), which were implemented within the EQUAL-IST project at the University of Muenster (WWU), Department of Information Systems (DIS). Note: Interventions are specific activities aimed at changing the status quo (e.g., Craig 2015).

The need to tackle the under-representation of women at DIS at all levels motivated its participation in the EQUAL-IST project. In 2017 the share of women among Bachelor Information Systems (IS) students was 13.2% (vs. 46% of women among all WWU students). The shares of women were higher in the Master IS study programme (25%), as well as among doctoral researchers (24%) and full professors (1 out of 6, 16.7%), although the numbers were low in these cat-

egories too. The lowest share of women was observed among post-doctoral researchers (12%).

The article starts with the introduction of the approach followed at WWU within the EQUAL-IST project. Afterwards, the main implemented interventions are introduced and classified according to the objectives they intended to achieve; the faced resistances are indicated here as well. The article is concluded with a summary of the steps towards ensuring the sustainability of the initiated interventions after the end of the EQUAL-IST project.

## 2 Approach

The approach followed at WWU within the EQUAL-IST project included the following phases [fig. 1].

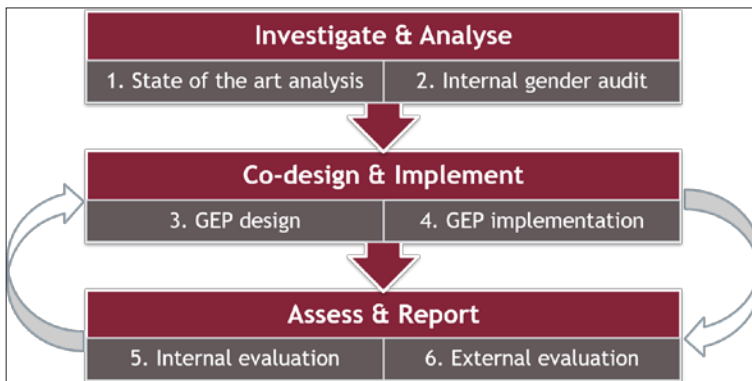


Figure 1 Approach followed at WWU within the EQUAL-IST project

During the first phase, the state-of-the-art analysis of related work was performed in order to provide valuable insights into the forthcoming GEP design and implementation at DIS. Here the following materials were collected and analysed: GEPs implemented at Departments of Information Systems in Germany and information about third-party funded projects aimed at the GEP design and implementation.

During the second phase, an internal gender audit was conducted (i) to investigate current issues related to gender equality, diversity, and work-family balance faced by students or staff members at DIS and the School of Business and Economics (SBE) - the faculty which DIS belongs to ('challenges' hereafter), and (ii) to collect the ideas to address these challenges ('ideas' hereafter). The internal gender audit included the following steps:

First, in order to show evidence that women are under-represented at all levels at DIS, comprehensive gender-disaggregated statistics, as well as the indicators related to work-life balance, were collected and calculated for IS students and DIS staff members for the years 2011-18. Moreover, it was attempted to collect the same statistics for all Departments of Information Systems in Germany. This initiative, however, was not entirely successful, as only few relevant statistics could be found. The statistics for DIS were then analysed and later on extended and used in the subsequent project phases. The extended statistics were required, in particular, to justify the interventions initiated within the EQUAL-IST project and the need in their continuous implementation after the end of the project. It is intended to continue the collection, analysis, and dissemination of relevant gender-disaggregated statistics of (potential) staff members (both academic and non-academic) and students after the end of the EQUAL-IST project. A respective activity was included in the project sustainability plan.

Second, a comprehensive survey "Gender Equality & Diversity @SBE" was conducted, where DIS and SBE staff members and students were invited to participate. The survey was designed in a way that each target group (academic staff members, non-academic staff members, and students) received a set of dedicated questions in addition to the questions relevant for all target groups. Thus, a more profound feedback from each target group could be obtained. The survey was informed by (1) the survey on the status of women faculty conducted by the Association for Information Systems Women Network and (2) extant academic literature on gender imbalance in the IS field (e.g., Ahuja 2002; Armstrong, Riemenschneider 2014; Loiacono, Iyer, Armstrong, Beekhuizen, Craig 2016). As a result, 122 complete responses could be collected: 74 from academic staff members (43 of them were from DIS), 7 from non-academic staff members (5 of them were from DIS), and 41 from students (17 of them were from DIS). The survey data, together with the collected statistics, were then analysed and relevant findings were communicated during the subsequent gender audit studies, namely: (i) a workshop with six IS students; (ii) five interviews with decision-makers (three of them were from DIS); and (iii) a focus group with two DIS non-academic staff members (both female team assistants). It is intended to rework and regularly conduct follow-up surveys "Gender Equality & Diversity @SBE". A respective activity was included in the project sustainability plan.

The challenges and ideas to address them, which were identified during the internal gender audit, were then discussed and extended by DIS staff members and IS students via the aforementioned CrowdEquality online crowdsourcing platform. All DIS-related input collected via CrowdEquality was then analysed by EQUAL-IST project Working Group at WWU and discussed with the stakeholders foreseen to

be involved in the forthcoming implementation of the DIS GEP, including DIS study coordinator, representatives of IS student council, and representatives of WWU Equal Opportunities Office.

As a result, during the third phase, the DIS GEP document could be designed and in the subsequent fourth phase it was implemented. In DIS GEP the objectives to address the identified challenges were formulated ('objectives' hereafter). Furthermore, the action plan for the interventions aimed at achieving these objectives was set up. These interventions were based on the selected feasible ideas, which were proposed in the previous phase. The implemented interventions are summarised in the next section.

The fifth and sixth phases were focused on the continuous assessment and reporting on the progress and success of the DIS GEP implementation, which was done both internally (fifth phase) and by an external evaluator appointed for the EQUAL-IST project (sixth phase). The internal assessment was focused on the performed work, while the external assessment - on the impact of this work. In case the performed work was not in line with DIS GEP, corrective actions were discussed and carried out by respective stakeholders. DIS GEP was implemented in two iterations. Based on the outcomes of the 1st iteration and the feedback received from the project external evaluator, the initial DIS GEP document was refined and then implemented further during the 2nd iteration.

Further work packages of the EQUAL-IST project included project management, dissemination of all project activities, as well as ensuring that the ethics requirements set by the European Commission were fulfilled.

### 3 Implemented Interventions and Resistances Faced

This section provides an overview of the main interventions included in DIS GEP and implemented within the EQUAL-IST project. These interventions were aimed at achieving the objectives, which were set to address the challenges revealed during the internal gender audit at DIS.

The interventions were implemented at the department, faculty, and university levels and are tagged in table 1 as follows:

- [DIS] - Intervention was implemented at the department level primarily by EQUAL-IST project leader at WWU in collaboration with EQUAL-IST project Working Group at WWU.
- [SBE] - Intervention was implemented at the faculty level (which includes DIS) primarily by EQUAL-IST project leader at WWU in the role of SBE Equal Opportunities Officer.
- [WWU] - Intervention was implemented at the university level (which includes SBE and DIS) by EQUAL-IST project leader at

WWU and EQUAL-IST project Working Group at WWU in collaboration with WWU Equal Opportunities Office.

The first objective of the interventions implemented within the EQUAL-IST project (Objective A) was **to increase the share of women among Bachelor IS students**. The under-representation of women at DIS at all levels was the main reason, why DIS participated in the EQUAL-IST project. During the project internal gender audit, it was revealed that the root problem for it was the low share of women among *Bachelor IS* students.

The second objective was **to enhance inclusion of international IS students** (Objective B). The results of internal gender audit showed that international IS students often felt excluded, especially from group work, as German students tended to team up with other German students. The Master IS study programme at WWU, where English is the only language of instruction, needs to be focused on, as the share of international students there is especially high.

The third objective was **to improve work-family balance of DIS academic staff members** (Objective C). During the internal gender audit several academic staff members indicated that the expectations from them were not communicated clearly during the hiring process, which resulted in dissatisfaction and turnover intention. Difficulties in balancing work and family life were also highlighted by several parents working at DIS.

The fourth objective was **to raise awareness about the aspects related to gender equality** (Objective D). Although DIS faces an under-representation of women at all levels, the internal gender audit revealed that the topic of gender equality had *not* been extensively discussed or recognised as important. Overall lack of interest and even hostility towards the topic could be observed. Low interest in the topic of gender equality often stems from the lack of awareness about what constitutes gender equality and gender inequality issues beyond direct discrimination, why it is important to tackle these issues and how, as well as what interventions already exist at the department, faculty, university, and country levels.

Five interventions were implemented to achieve Objective A, five interventions to achieve Objective B, four interventions to achieve Objective C, and seven interventions to achieve Objective D. Moreover, three further valuable interventions were initiated. The intervention titles and goals are presented in table 1, whereas further details about each intervention are available at <https://www.wi.uni-muenster.de/career/diversity-and-inclusion>.

**Table 1** Overview of the interventions implemented at WWU within the EQUAL-IST project

<b>Title [Level of Implementation]</b>	<b>Goal(s)</b>
<b>Objective A: To increase the share of women among Bachelor IS students</b>	
Organisation and implementation of the events promoting the IS study programme within the "Hochschultag" annual information day. [SBE]	To promote the SBE study programmes to potential students as an inclusive place welcoming all.
Organisation and implementation of the events promoting the IS study programme within the "Girls' Day" annual information day. [DIS]	To promote the IS study programme to potential female students as an inclusive place welcoming all.
Survey "How did you learn about your study programme?" [DIS]	(i) To understand, how current Bachelor and Master IS students, especially female IS students, learned about their study programmes; (ii) to identify promising communication channels to promote the IS study programme; (iii) to reveal, how current communication channels promoting the IS study programme could be improved.
Preparatory intervention: Review of relevant studies.	
Workshop "Why should one want to study Information Systems at the University of Muenster?" [DIS]	To identify promising activities and communication channels to promote the IS study programme, especially to potential female students.
Revision of the marketing materials promoting the IS study programme applying a gender-sensitive approach. [DIS]	To revise the marketing materials promoting the IS study programme applying a gender-sensitive approach in order to ensure that this study programme is presented in an attractive and welcoming way for all.
Preparatory intervention: Review of relevant studies.	
<b>Objective B: To enhance inclusion of international IS students</b>	
Workshop "Towards higher gender diversity and inclusion of international students in the Information Systems study programme at the University of Muenster?". [WWU]	To discuss the ongoing and prospective interventions towards enhancing gender diversity and inclusion of international students in the IS study programme.
Initiation of a working group within IS student council to support international IS students. [DIS]	(i) To support international IS students; (ii) to connect them with local students.
Organisation and implementation of the sessions "How to study successfully in Muenster" within the "Master Orientation Day" information days for Master IS students. [DIS]	To provide practical information and recommendations related to studying IS at WWU to those Master IS students who did not study at WWU before and, in particular, to international IS students.
Assignment of students to groups within (Master) IS courses in a random way. [DIS]	(i) To bring in contact local and international students during the group work within (Master) IS courses; (ii) to mitigate gender and culture prejudices that could exist.
Investigation of the opportunities for the involvement of regular international IS students into existing initiatives supporting international (exchange) students in Muenster. [DIS]	To explore, how regular international IS students could be (further) involved in existing initiatives supporting exchange students in Muenster.

Title [Level of Implementation]	Goal(s)
<b>Objective C: To improve work-family balance of DIS academic staff members</b>	
Support in the design and implementation of the survey "Studying with Children". [WWU]	(i) To identify and analyse the requirements of students who have children or are about to become parents; (ii) to understand their level of awareness of existing (at WWU and beyond) initiatives and opportunities for parents.
Implementation of the updated in 2018 version of the Maternity Protection Act. [SBE]	To support and protect students who have children or are about to become parents.
Improvement in the communication to (potential) DIS staff members of the expectations from them. [DIS]	To improve communication of the expectations from DIS staff members.
Workshop "Why should one want to work at the University of Muenster's Department of Information Systems?" [DIS]	To identify promising activities to make DIS an attractive place to work for the best potential academic staff members, and especially for qualified and motivated women.
<b>Objective D: To raise awareness about the aspects related to gender equality</b>	
Dissemination of the implemented interventions. [WWU, SBE, DIS, external]	To disseminate the implemented interventions to all target groups.
Presentation of DIS GEP at a brown bag meeting of DIS academic staff members. [DIS]	
Presentation of DIS GEP to DIS professors. [DIS]	
Dissemination of the implemented interventions to EQUAL-IST project external evaluator. [DIS]	
Dissemination of the implemented interventions within the proposals for SBE national and international re-accreditations. [SBE]	
Communication of DIS GEP to SBE dean. [SBE]	
Communication of DIS GEP to SBE Equal Opportunities Commission. [SBE]	
Dissemination of the implemented interventions to WWU Decentralised Equal Opportunity Officers. [WWU]	
Proposal of the suggestions for improvement of existing regulations related to gender equality within the refinement of WWU Equal Opportunity Framework document. [WWU]	To improve the existing at WWU regulations related to gender equality.
Support of a photo campaign at SBE for the 2018 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. [WWU, SBE]	To support the 2018 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.
Raising awareness of gender equality aspects among the members of appointment committees for tenured positions at SBE. [SBE]	(i) To ensure fair and transparent appointment procedure at SBE; (ii) to sensitise members of appointment committees at SBE about the importance of ensuring equal treatment of all candidates and avoiding any form of bias and discrimination.



Title [Level of Implementation]	Goal(s)
Incorporation of the gender equality aspects into the SBE mission statement. [SBE]	To incorporate the gender equality aspects into the SBE mission statement.
Awareness raising activities at DIS by EQUAL-IST project external evaluator. [DIS]	To raise awareness about the importance of promotion of gender equality at DIS.
Keynote speech "Why we Need more Women in IT-Startups" within the "Startup Nights Münster" event. [external]	To raise awareness of the participants of the "Startup Nights Münster" event about the importance of promotion of gender equality in IT-Startups.
<b>Further implemented interventions</b>	
Development of the WWU Database of Gender Equality Interventions. [WWU]	(i) To structure and store online in a secure way the information about WWU interventions promoting gender equality; (ii) to provide an overview of these interventions and to disseminate them; (iii) to continuously revise, update, and extend information about these interventions.
Appointment of EQUAL-IST project leader at WWU as (i) SBE Equal Opportunities Officer and (ii) member of WWU Equal Opportunities Commission. [WWU, SBE]	(i) To increase visibility of the EQUAL-IST project and the initiated interventions; (ii) to build alliances for further collaboration.
Formation of a new Equal Opportunities Commission at SBE. [SBE]	To assemble a new Equal Opportunities Commission at SBE with active and motivated members.

Resistances towards the EQUAL-IST project were faced both at the department and faculty levels, especially at the beginning of the project. A general resistance to acknowledge that there were internal challenges related to gender equality could be observed from DIS and SBE decision-makers and staff members. However, in the course of the project, a set of interventions were implemented to address this resistance and there was a positive change in the attitude towards the topic of gender equality. In particular, in the course of the EQUAL-IST project SBE dean, who was initially sceptical towards the topic of promotion of gender equality, became sensitised about its importance. She became a member of the dedicated working group for reworking WWU Equal Opportunity Framework document (German: "*Gleichstellungsrahmenplan der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster*", <https://www.uni-muenster.de/Gleichstellung/Gleichstellungsrahmenplan.html>) and contributed to its fundamental revision and improvement.

#### 4 Project Sustainability and Conclusion

The interventions towards higher gender equality, diversity, and work-family balance, which were initiated within the EQUAL-IST project, need to be sustainable to make a difference. According to the

work done by Athena Swan (<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-characters/athena-swan>), the results of successful interventions become visible only after at least five years since the start of their implementation. In order to develop the EQUAL-IST project sustainability plan, the initiated interventions were analysed and those, which needed or had potential to continue to be implemented beyond the project runtime, were identified and discussed by EQUAL-IST project leader at WWU with EQUAL-IST project Working Group at WWU. The selected interventions were then classified as those (i) relevant only for DIS and (ii) relevant for SBE (which includes DIS). These interventions formed the basis for the sustainability plans at the department level (DIS sustainability plan) and the faculty level (SBE sustainability plan). Both sustainability plans are discussed in this section. While DIS sustainability plan has been finalised, approved by DIS professors, and published on the DIS website facing no significant resistance, the design of the SBE sustainability plan is still in progress. Both documents will need to be disseminated, implemented, as well as later on regularly evaluated and refined. It is important to ensure that the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the sustainability plans remain active and motivated.

#### 4.1 DIS Sustainability Plan

At the department level, a new document entitled *“Plan for Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement of Talented Women, Internationals, and Parents for the Department of Information Systems”* was designed as DIS sustainability plan for the period 2019-22. The goals of the DIS sustainability plan were to ensure sustainability of the interventions initiated within the EQUAL-IST project and to improve the processes for personnel recruitment, retention, and advancement DIS.

Once the activities to be included in the DIS sustainability plan were selected, the main stakeholders foreseen to be involved in their implementation were contacted and their commitment was ensured. These stakeholders included DIS study coordinator, IS student council, and selected DIS staff members. A draft version of DIS sustainability plan was then presented by EQUAL-IST project leader at WWU to DIS professors during one of their regular meetings. DIS professors were asked to provide feedback to the presented activities, as well as to propose further activities to be included in the document. All feedback was incorporated into the final version of the DIS sustainability plan, which was approved by DIS professors in July 2019 and published on the DIS website. The document is available at <https://www.wi.uni-muenster.de/career/diversity-and-inclusion>.

The activities included in the DIS sustainability plan were aimed at achieving the following objectives, which match the objectives of

the interventions implemented within the EQUAL-IST project presented earlier (Objective A - Objective C):

1. To increase the share of women among Bachelor IS students.
2. To enhance inclusion of international IS students.
3. To improve work-family balance of DIS academic staff members.

17 activities were included in the DIS sustainability plan: eight activities to achieve the first objective, four activities to achieve the second objective, and three activities to achieve the third objective; moreover, two further activities were proposed, which dealt with (i) raising awareness of the topics related to gender equality among IS students and (ii) evaluating the implementation progress and success of all activities. For each activity, the following information was presented: goal(s) and main idea, implementation frequency, and the stakeholders responsible for leading the activity management and implementation ('activity leads' hereafter). Activity leads are responsible for further development of the detailed action plan for each activity, including definition of the activity target indicators, timeline, resources required, and further relevant aspects. Commitment of most activity leads has been achieved. The DIS sustainability plan is foreseen as a living document, which will be discussed and monitored continuously and reissued every four years.

## 4.2 SBE Sustainability Plan

At the faculty level, an existing document entitled "*Gender Equality Plan for the University of Münster's School of Business and Economics*" (German: "*Gleichstellungsplan der Wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Fakultät*") is currently reworked and updated as SBE sustainability plan for the period 2019-23. Establishment of this policy-planning document is prescribed by the state and university regulations and is obligatory for all faculties at WWU.

Once the activities to be included in the document were selected, they were presented by EQUAL-IST project leader at WWU (in the role of SBE Equal Opportunities Officer) to SBE Equal Opportunities Commission during a dedicated workshop. The commission members agreed that it was important to ensure that the interventions initiated within the EQUAL-IST project would be continuously implemented in the future and widely disseminated. They also proposed further activities to be included in the SBE sustainability plan. All ideas were collected into a shared document, where the commission members then had an opportunity to express their opinions. Further ideas for the activities to be included in the SBE sustainability plan were proposed by SBE dean during one of the meetings with EQUAL-IST project leader at WWU. These ideas were incorporated into the

shared document as well. The document was then transformed into a draft version of the SBE sustainability plan, which was shared with SBE Equal Opportunities Commission, SBE Dean, and the new SBE Equal Opportunities Officer who overtook this role from EQUAL-IST project leader at WWU. The document is available at <https://uni-muenster.sciebo.de/s/1wMmdIFNOV2wasS>. It is crucial that the new SBE Equal Opportunities Officer and SBE Equal Opportunities Commission members finalise and receive approval of this document, as well as monitor and support its implementation. Commitment of the following stakeholders foreseen to be involved in the implementation of the SBE sustainability plan has already been achieved: SBE Equal Opportunities Commission, SBE student council, and selected SBE staff members.

The proposed draft SBE sustainability plan had the following target fields, which were in line with the objectives of WWU Equal Opportunity Framework document:

- a. Monitoring of the intervention course and outcomes.
- b. Promotion of equal opportunities for (potential) students.
- c. Promotion of equal opportunities in personnel recruitment, retention, and advancement.
- d. Raising awareness of the importance of promotion of gender equality.
- e. Gender-sensitive communication.
- f. Prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.
- g. Non-discriminatory committees and meeting times.

23 activities were proposed in these target fields: three activities in the target field A, four activities in the target field B, one activity in the target field C, nine activities in the target field D, and two activities in each of the target fields E, F, and G.

It is noteworthy that only one activity was proposed to address target field C: "Promotion of equal opportunities in personnel recruitment, retention, and advancement". This activity was focused on the provision of informational and advisory support to staff members and especially to staff members with children. No further activities at SBE were included here due to a high number of related interventions at the university level. It was decided to first disseminate and promote existing interventions, rather than to initiate further faculty-specific interventions.

Two activities were included in both the DIS sustainability plan and the SBE sustainability plan: the first one was aimed at the application of a gender-sensitive approach when revising existing or establishing new materials (including teaching materials) and the other one was aimed at regular evaluation of the implementation course and outcomes.

In addition to preparing the draft SBE sustainability plan, EQUAL-IST project leader at WWU developed a document summarising the envisioned tasks and responsibilities of future SBE Equal Opportu-

nities Officers and estimated annual workload for each task (available at <https://uni-muenster.sciebo.de/s/Hk7SDfqWBM0gk6u>). This document was presented to SBE dean, arguing that the current situation that the position of SBE Equal Opportunities Officer does not receive any dedicated funding needs to be changed and additional support, resources, and opportunities need to be provided to SBE Equal Opportunities Officers. As a result, the following structural changes related to the position of SBE Equal Opportunities Officer took place. First, a tenured female professor at SBE overtook the role of SBE Equal Opportunities Officer from EQUAL-IST project leader at WWU. Earlier this role was assigned to SBE staff members who had fixed-term contracts, which hindered the continuity and sustainability of the conducted work. Furthermore, one of the tenured SBE staff members was assigned to support the new SBE Equal Opportunities Officer on an operative basis. Thus, sustainability of the gender equality work at SBE could be ensured.

Finally, it needs to be mentioned that further interventions aimed at enhancing gender equality, diversity, and work-family balance are continuously implemented at the WWU level, independently or with only minor support from the EQUAL-IST project. WWU Equal Opportunities Office is primarily involved in leading the implementation of these interventions and ensuring their sustainability.

To conclude, the EQUAL-IST project resulted in an increased attention and a higher visibility of the topic of gender equality not only at the department, but also at the faculty and university levels. Enhanced legitimisation of the topic and raised awareness about the importance of promotion of gender equality at DIS and SBE positively contributed to the sustainability of the interventions initiated within the project. The project sustainability plan was designed at both the department and faculty levels and it is intended to evaluate regularly the implementation progress and success, as well as to refine both sustainability plans.

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