



Welcome address by the President of TU Braunschweig, Professor Angela Ittel Tag der Vielfalt (Diversity Day) on 14 July 2022

Dear colleagues,
dear students,
dear guests,

It is with great pleasure that I would like to welcome you today to the first Tag der Vielfalt (Diversity Day) at TU Braunschweig where we together can set an example for diversity, equal opportunities and anti-discrimination.

Days like this offer us the opportunity to highlight the value of diversity and to engage in conversation, to meet new people and perspectives and to develop ideas together—away from the daily routine of university life. Days like this bring visibility to our values and draw attention to our convictions, which we want to and have to fight for every day.

In some places we are seeing a shift towards more diversity and greater participation. At the same time, our society is still characterised by inequality. Attributes such as gender, physical condition and also origin have a significant influence on how people are perceived, what they are expected to do and what opportunities they have.

Promoting diversity at an institution like our University is directly linked to dismantling structural inequality and discrimination. Real diversity can only be achieved if we create equal access, allow our university to be open, break down existing barriers and enable equal opportunities.

Both teaching and research, and we as a university as a whole, improve when we learn to understand perspectives other than our own, when we take them seriously and incorporate them into our thinking and actions.

Since I took office, increasing and strengthening diversity has been a systematic part of how we strategically develop our University.

Promoting diversity is an integral part of our strategic approach. It is based on a broad portfolio of strategic projects and steps to implement holistic development in all areas of performance.

The aim is to transparently assess the relevant processes at our institution with regard to diversity and equality aspects, to identify levers for optimising diversity and anti-discrimination and to accompany the optimisation of processes through change management.

We pursue the clear goal of promoting diversity within our own organisation and to communicate it externally in order to fulfil our social responsibility as a future-oriented institution of education. Fully convinced of the necessity to address the issue of equal opportunities and diversity, we would like to be a role model for other universities and employers.

Diversity of perspectives is also created through international as well as interdisciplinary research and cooperation. Today you will be able to get to know two examples: The Cluster of Excellence SE²A (Sustainable and Energy-Efficient Aviation) and the new project “Geschlechterdimensionen in MINT-Disziplinen: InnovationsHubs als Weg zu ganzheitlicher Exzellenz” (a process of developing a concept for research supportive structures to implement gender dimensions in STEM disciplines), one of the selected innovative structural projects with model character that contribute to make gender aspects an integral part of research.

We are not alone in our commitment to strengthening gender equality and diversity and in bringing these two important fields together: The German Research Foundation (DFG) is going to launch a new initiative and in future will not only consider research-oriented standards on gender equality but also on **diversity**. In addition to gender and gender identity, these now also include other aspects such as disabilities and chronic illnesses or ethnic and social origin. The intersectional interweaving of different dimensions of diversity is also to be considered.

By doing so, DFG is sending an important signal: Institutions of higher education must make structural changes in order to create equal opportunities and increase the diversity among students and staff. Furthermore, DFG focuses on its responsibility towards members of its institution with regard to protection against sexual harassment, discrimination and bullying.

At TU Braunschweig, we are addressing this issue: As a patron and active supporter, I would like to draw your attention to our university-wide KNOW MORE campaign against sexualised violence. According to a study from 2012—the most recent statistics to date—54% of female students experience sexual harassment during their studies, and almost half of them don't tell anyone about it.

With KNOW MORE we draw attention to a problem that is rarely discussed and yet omnipresent. The aim is to break down the taboo about sexualised violence and to raise awareness of counselling services in the city and at TU Braunschweig.

KNOW MORE stands for awareness and prevention through knowledge and visibility. The centrepiece of the campaign is a series of scientific lectures and workshops for all students and employees of TU Braunschweig. Visit the KNOW MORE campaign state; you can actively support us by distributing the information materials.

The campaign came about through the commitment of students from the Autonomes FrauenLesbenReferat (Autonomous Women's and Lesbians' Department, AFLR) and the Green Office. They have found allies in the Equal Opportunities Office and cooperate with the Beratungsstelle gegen sexualisierte Gewalt (Counselling Centre against Sexualised Violence).

Finally, I would like to cordially invite you to take advantage of the opportunities offered by our first Diversity Day at TU Braunschweig. Network, promote yourself and your ideas, contribute your own perspective and get to know and understand those of others.

We can only achieve diversity and equal opportunities if we work together to shape our University in a spirit of solidarity.

Hoisting of the rainbow flag

We are celebrating a small anniversary today. For the fifth time now, we hoist the rainbow flag at TU Braunschweig as a sign of self-determination, openness, and acceptance.

For a year now, the **Progress** Pride Flag has been permanently hanging on Universitätsplatz, making it clear: Pride is more than just a month.

The Pride Flag has always stood for pride and empowerment, it represents queer communities and is an important symbol against queer hostility. The Progress Pride Flag was further developed in 2018 by Daniel Qasar, a non-binary graphic designer. It symbolises progress and the collective fight against discrimination. The colours pink, white and blue represent trans* people and gender diversity. Brown and black represent queer black people and People of Colour and set a sign against racism—in solidarity and intersectionally.

We can observe the simultaneity of progress and discrimination worldwide: Openly queer people are taking up political office and the visibility of queer lifestyles is increasing. At the same time, events such as the restriction of trans* rights in the USA or the terrible terrorist attack in Oslo show that queer hostility restricts people in their individual self-determination and can ultimately cost their lives.

By hoisting the rainbow flag today, we create visibility—for the rights of queer people and the dismantling of structural discrimination worldwide, in Germany, and at TU Braunschweig.

With the “all-gender WC” campaign in the Forum Building, the Equal Opportunity Office is drawing attention to the need for change. The gender entry “diverse” has been in place in Germany since 2018. Despite this official recognition of gender diversity, there are two-gender-segregated toilets in most public buildings. Inter*, non-binary and trans* people, as well as people who do not conform to the societal stereotype of men and women, experience hostility or are denied entry—regardless of which toilet they choose.

It is possible to maintain safe spaces for women AND create new ones: All-gender toilets serve as a supplement, can be used by all people and lead to a reduction of structural discrimination.

For one week starting today, you can find the exhibition “Sexualität und Geschlecht im Spiegel” (Sexuality and Gender in the Mirror) in the Architecture Pavilion. It offers the opportunity to learn more about sexual and gender diversity and takes us on a journey through different cultures, eras and environments.

Let us be open to new ideas and listen to people when they share their experiences and demands for a diverse society.

I am now pleased to hand over the floor to representatives of queer student groups.