



## Diversity Day

### Opening speech by President Angela Ittel

26.06.2023

Dear students, dear colleagues, dear guests,

I am delighted to welcome you today to the second Diversity Day at our university.

A varied programme awaits us, with music acts, keynotes on diversity at TU Braunschweig and in our society, and - to do justice to our focus topic this year - queerness and its dimensions. In the Altgebäude you will have the opportunity to attend workshops on allyship, the basics of diversity and queerness.

We hope that today University Square will become a space for shared experiences and exchange of perspectives regarding the topics of diversity and anti-discrimination. 24 initiatives from TU Braunschweig as well as local groups invite you to come and talk and find out about different focal points of their work. The Oasis on University Square will become a Queer Oasis for Diversity Day. Various queer groups and initiatives have thus created a place for networking and exchange.

As a university, we are at the beginning of an exciting process:

Since July 2021, TU Braunschweig has been pursuing the strategic approach of holistic development with the aim of achieving excellent standards as an overall university. With the University Development Concept 2030, we have decided to understand diversity as a strategic cross-sectional topic in our development, which means that we will consistently anchor the topic of diversity strategically. The focus is on all dimensions of diversity and their overlaps. It is important to reflect the diversity of our society at the university, to ensure equal opportunities and to consistently integrate diversity aspects in the performance dimensions of research, teaching & learning, transfer and governance & administration.

In recent years, we have developed a great deal in terms of structure and content, and on this basis, the Executive Board launched the development of a diversity strategy last week. The staff unit Strategic University Development will, under the management of Anouk Almstedt, our Diversity Policies Officer, coordinate and accompany the process with the support of the Innovation Team of the Projekthaus. The aim of the strategy process is to provide us with guidelines for diversity-conscious university development based on our University Development Concept 2030 and existing structures, which we can use to orient and keep ourselves in check in the coming years. This is a decisive and strategically necessary step for our university on the way to valuing diversity and equal opportunities.

With events like the Diversity Day, we would like to inform you as visitors and take you along in the process of diversity-conscious university development. We would like to get to know your perspectives

and exchange ideas with you. At the Strategic University Development booth, you will gain a deeper insight and be able to contribute your perspective. We not only look forward to your ideas, we actually depend on them so that we can develop a jointly supported strategy.

In order to bring the many aspects and facets of diversity more into focus for our university, we have been setting a focus topic around diversity for the past two years.

This year, the TU Braunschweig has set the focus *queer@TU*. Since I have been President of TU Braunschweig, I have already had the pleasure of raising the rainbow flag twice together with representatives of queer student groups. I am particularly pleased that this year, for the first time, the newly founded LGBTIAQ\*Staff Network is also represented and welcome Jana Szeimies from the Diversity Office, Kenny Bundschuh, Marian Baden and Johannes Höing to hoist the rainbow flag. We must not take for granted the right to self-determination and the diversity in our society that we celebrate today. We must stand up for them and value them every day.

The relevance becomes particularly clear when we look at this issue in the current global context. Take a look at the US, the country that has been a pioneer and role model for us on these issues for decades. In the state of Florida, and a few days ago in Texas, laws were passed that prohibit diversity, equity and inclusion programmes and structures at public universities. People who work on these issues at universities have to leave their positions within 6 months and are assigned other tasks. Populist-led debates that label social justice and diversity movements as indoctrination or a so-called "woke-ideology", which means placing hyper-sensitive and unwarranted attention on anti-racism and social justice, deny the relevance of even scientifically sound findings on structural inequality and discrimination.

In Germany, too, terms like 'gender mania' or 'early sexualisation' are shifting the discourse around gender and sexual diversity. Even on Instagram posts about today's Diversity Day with the raising of the rainbow flag at our university, there are positive comments as well as those that call this 'ideology' and 'indoctrination'. As a university, we have to take responsibility and stand up for an open, argumentative, inclusive and just society.

In the University Development Concept 2030, we set ourselves the goal: "We create an environment in which everyone studies and works together free of discrimination." The Focus 2023: *queer@TU* is a joint project of the Diversity Office, the Equal Opportunities Office, and myself, with the aim of contributing to queer-friendliness at our university and making it a safe and discrimination-free place for all people. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Diversity Office for implementing Focus 2023 in cooperation with numerous institutions at TU Braunschweig. If you have an idea for improving working and studying conditions for queer people in your area of work, the Diversity Office will be happy to advise you. In particular, the Communication and Press Service supports the focus year with regular contributions on the topic of queerness and thus makes a decisive contribution to the visibility and communication of knowledge.

The Diversity Office has once again labelled all-gender toilets for today, drawing attention to the fact that, despite the legal recognition that there are more than two genders, public toilets are mostly still segregated by two genders. For intersex, trans\* and non-binary people and people who do not

outwardly conform to the stereotypical image of men or women, toilets - as a necessary space in everyday study and work - are often not safe places. In addition to direct hostility or expulsion, questions such as "Are you in the right place?" can also be unpleasant and hurtful without negative intent. The installation of gender-neutral toilets contributes to the reduction of discrimination and thus to the goal of equality for all genders. As part of Focus 2023: *queer@TU*, the Equal Opportunities Office will draft a concept for the installation of all-gender toilets to create new shelters while keeping existing shelters for women.

At the booth of the Diversity Office (just behind the Queer Oasis), members of the LGBTIAQ\* student as well as staff network will be present. There you will find a contact point to get into conversation and to network with other queer people at the TU Braunschweig.

I will now hand over to Jana Szeimies, who will give us a closer look at the work of the Diversity Office and the *Focus 2023: queer@TU*.