HITS
Heidelberg Institute for Theoretical Studies

HITS Equality Plan

(10.2026)

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Preamble

The Heidelberg Institute for Theoretical Studies (HITS gGmbH) was established in 2010 by physicist and SAP co-founder Klaus Tschira (1940-2015) and the Klaus Tschira Foundation as a private, non-profit research institute.
HITS conducts basic research in the natural, mathematical and computer sciences. Major research directions include complex simulations across scales, making sense of data, and enabling science via computational research. Application areas range from molecular biology to astrophysics. An essential characteristic of the Institute is interdisciplinarity, implemented in numerous cross-group and cross-disciplinary projects. The base funding of HITS is provided by the Klaus Tschira Foundation.

HITS employs its own staff and hosts students as well as visiting scientists from other institutions. We refer to all persons working at HITS as "HITSters".

Basic considerations

Equality and Equity at HITS:
Equality means treating all HITSters the same under the same rules, with equal rights, access to scientific work, pay, and opportunities to develop, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, nationality, or religion.
Equity means that HITS takes targeted measures to compensate for existing disadvantages and structural barriers, ensuring that equal treatment translates into equal outcomes.

As an internationally oriented research institute, HITS is committed to research and the support of young scientists.
It is a matter of course for us to offer all people working at HITS the same opportunities to thrive in a scientific environment in which everyone can develop freely, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, nationality, and religion.
Integrity and sustainability, social responsibility in a dialogue with the public, international orientation, mutual respect, family friendliness and diversity are cornerstones of our institute.

The following is an overview of the measures already implemented and planned to ensure both equality and equity at HITS, in terms of gender and beyond.

Goals

This equality plan is intended to focus on and ensure the implementation of the German Federal Equality Act (BGleiG) and its objectives:

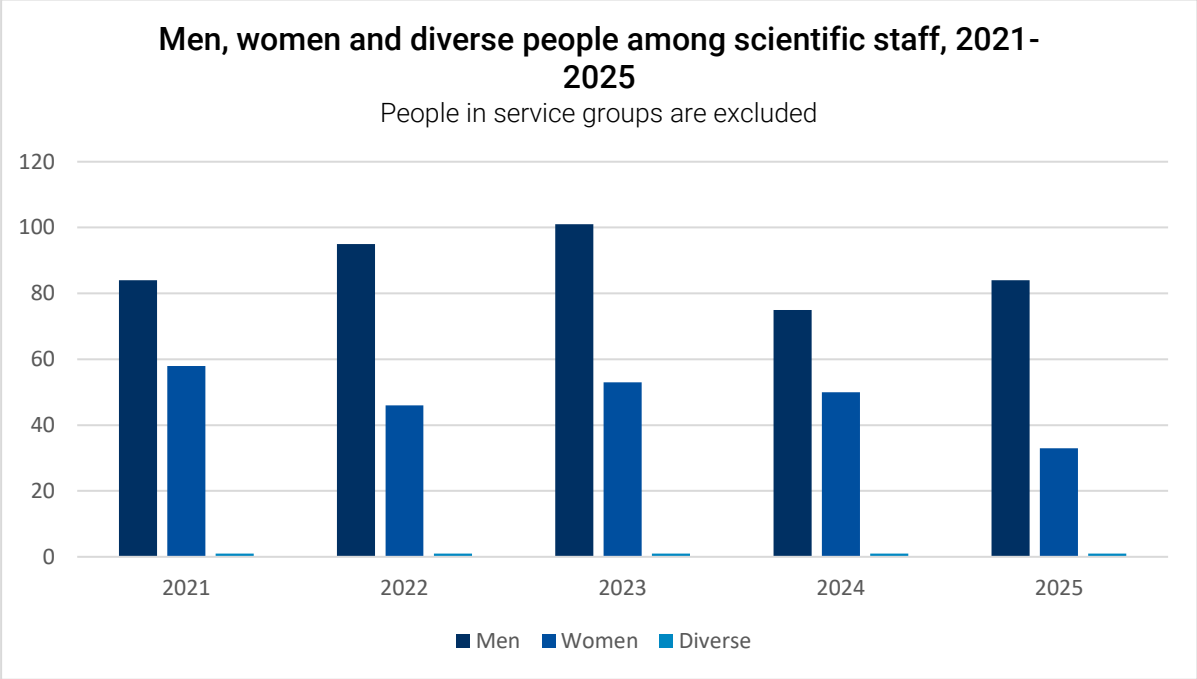
- Equality of women, men and non-binary persons.
- Elimination and prevention of existing discrimination based on gender.
- Improving family friendliness and the compatibility of family, care, and work.

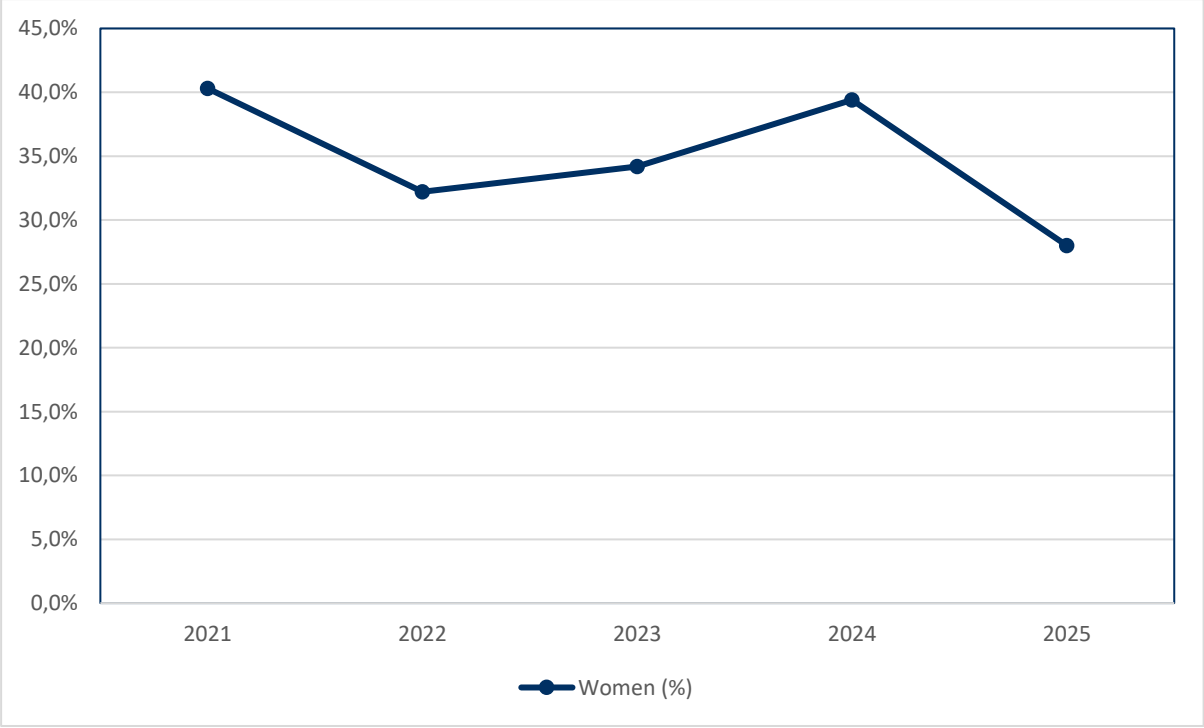
It is reviewed and updated at least every three years with regard to the measures and their impact. The data in the table below was collected for the first time in December 2021 and is updated annually.

Diversity at HITS in numbers (as of 01/2025)

Year	HITSters total	Women (%)	Scientific staff	Women (%)	Bachelor/Master	Women (%)	PhD students	Women (%)	Scientific employees*	Women (%)	Group leaders	Women (%)
2025	159	32.7	118	28	15	13.3	41	34,2	24	25	13	23.1
2024	170	37.7	127	39.4	19	36.8	49	38.8	30	43.3	13	30.8
2023	177	37.3	155	34.2	24	41.7	52	28.8	37	37.8	13	30.8
2022	162	35.2	143	32.2	29	34.5	49	28.6	36	36.1	13	38.5
2021	168	42.3	144	40.3	31	48.4	45	24.4	31	35.5	12	41.7

*without PhD Students





The numbers of women and non-binary people are reported separately in the relevant tables. The proportion of women among scientific staff fluctuated considerably between 2021 and 2025, with no consistent trend.

However, it is noteworthy, that the proportion of women in leadership positions declined from 30.8% in 2024 to 23.1% in 2025, due to the departure of three female group leaders.

HITS aims to ensure the continued recruitment of women in scientific positions. At the same time, positions are filled according to qualification and suitability. As an equity measure where candidates are equally qualified, preference may be given to women or applicants from underrepresented or diverse backgrounds to strengthen diversity within the scientific community.

Measures

Workplace and hours

Place of work
We enable location-flexible working within Germany for a maximum of 50% of working hours in agreement with the supervisor.

Flexible working hours and core hours
Working hours at HITS are flexible. In line with our family-friendly working hours, meetings take place between 9am and 4pm where possible. This is to enable all HITSters to attend important internal meetings while balancing childcare and family commitments.

Working hours, part-time employment, parental leave
In accordance with German law, HITS offers the possibility of part-time employment within the framework of parental leave. Flexible working hours and opportunities for part-time work can be agreed individually with the group leaders.

Hiring criteria and salary

Equal Pay

Staff are selected and paid regardless of gender. The salaries are based on public-sector tariff agreements and are gender independent. This approach has been the standard since the institute's inception. We are thus in compliance with the legal requirements of the Pay Transparency Act.

Recruiting

Qualifications and suitability are taken into account when selecting applicants, regardless of gender.

Our job advertisements are always formulated in a (gender) neutral way. HITS sees itself as an institute where equal opportunities are practiced.

Promoting young talent (equity measures)

Girls' Day

Girls' Day - Girls' Future Day" is sponsored by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology, and Space (BMFTR). This program introduces girls to apprenticeships and courses of study in the fields of IT, crafts, natural sciences and technology, in which women have tended to be underrepresented to date. HITS has been involved in "Girls' Day" since 2015 and offers workshops in the MINT area (MINT stands for mathematics, information technology, natural sciences, and technology).

Girls' Digital Camp

The "Girls' Digital Camps" are an initiative of the Ministry of Economics, Labor and Housing of the State of Baden-Württemberg and the Heidelberg University of Education, which offers female students opportunities on various IT and computer science topics in connection with social innovations. HITS is one of the cooperation partners of this initiative and offers project days for female students as part of this program.

Communication

Gender-sensitive language

We emphasize the importance of respectful and gender-sensitive language in presentations, publications, on the internet and in social media. To this end, we have developed our own guidelines that are binding for official communication. In addition, we sensitize all HITSters to this topic and provide information material.

Communication on various topics

Current information on topics such as family friendliness and diversity can be found on our intranet. The relevant intranet pages offer presentations, guidelines, and further links as well as information on contact persons.

Awareness training

Since 2022, we offered awareness training courses at HITS to sensitize individual employees (management, administration, communications, group leaders, staff scientists, postdocs) with personnel responsibility to the topics of diversity and equality.
All employees are required to complete a digital training session on the General Equal Treatment Act, which we have been offering in LMS format for the past two years. In addition, we provide information on the intranet for all HITSters.

Working groups

Staff Representation

At HITS, there is a committee called Staff Representation, in which HITSters from various groups meet regularly to discuss suggestions for improving work at the Institute. The results are then discussed with the management and implemented. Documentation of the work of the Staff Representation can be found on the HITS intranet.

Committees

In addition to the Staff Representation, there can be other "committees" such as on the topics of family friendliness, and sustainability, respectively. These committees are usually organized by

interested HITSters from various groups and deal with a specific topic. The results of their work can be found on the HITS intranet and in excerpts in this document.

Family Friendliness

The Family Friendliness Committee has implemented the following items:

- "Family friendliness" included as one of the goals in the HITS mission statement.
- An overview of measures and benefits related to family friendliness (to be found on the intranet).
- Information about offers for family friendliness during the onboarding process.
- Core meeting hours.
- In exceptional situations, it is possible to bring children to the office. Children's books and toys for different age groups are provided.
- Breastfeeding room: a room in the HITS main building can be used for breastfeeding babies.

We are constantly working on further measures.

Offers for professional development

Annual reviews

During annual reviews, HITS employees discuss the past working year and future tasks with their supervisors. Work results are evaluated, goals agreed and training needs identified. Annual reviews also provide an opportunity for personal feedback on a range of issues, including workload, priorities and the professional conduct of both employees and managers.

Mentoring Program

The junior group leader phase is particularly important in an academic career. We support junior group leaders at HITS by providing them with other group leaders as mentors who advise them on content-related issues and questions about group leadership or their own career planning. HITS is currently working on a program designed to give junior group leaders and newly appointed group leaders an even better start in HITS's internal processes and those related to labor law. The code of conduct will also be taken into account in this program.

Networking

In science, exchange with other working groups is important and career-enhancing. HITS supports this exchange both within the Institute and with external scientists. Among other things, we facilitate participation in conferences, workshops and other events that promote scientific and interpersonal exchange. In addition, HITS awards the "Isabel Rojas Travel Award", which enables research stay of up to two months at a scientific institution of choice.
HITS works closely together with it's partner universities. Especially, for junior group leaders as well as Postdocs the affiliation with a prestigious university enhances academic career.

Heidelberg Laureate Forum (HLF)

HITS actively supports the professional development and international networking of early-career researchers through its partnership with the Heidelberg Laureate Forum (HLF). The forum brings together outstanding young scientists in mathematics and computer science with recipients of the disciplines' most prestigious awards, including the Abel Prize, Fields Medal, Nevanlinna Prize, ACM A.M. Turing Award, ACM Prize in Computing and IMU Abacus Medal. As a co-initiator and scientific partner of the HLF, Wildcard nominations to HITSters enable selected students and young researchers to participate in this unique international networking and mentoring opportunity.

Development and Training Programs

To promote equal opportunities and career development, HITS employees may access selected heiTRACKS career development programs and the University's Internal Training Program. These programs provide opportunities for professional development, career planning, leadership and networking, including training in areas such as gender and diversity, and work-life balance. Admission to selected heiTRACKS programs is subject to a selection process by Heidelberg University.
This cooperation helps ensure that HITS researchers and staff across different career stages have access to a broad range of professional development opportunities.

<u>Other Benefits</u>

Health Promotion

HITS offers a wide range of social benefits and health promotion measures:

- As part of a private supplementary health insurance, every employee can take advantage of preventive medical check-ups, which are included in the catalog of Individual Health Benefits.
- There is a subsidy on membership fees for a large gym chain in the region as well as yoga and other fitness activities on site.
- The institute offers a subsidized healthy lunch in the HITS canteen, which includes vegetarian and vegan options.
- There is a spacious garden on campus that can be used for walks or meetings, for example, as well as two ping pong tables.

Since 2026, all HITS researchers can sign up for an app-based health program and take steps to improve their physical and mental health. In addition to physical fitness programs, the program also offers nutritional advice and personal coaching sessions, which can be booked anonymously.

Coaching
If necessary, we support coaching to overcome communication barriers in teams. The management and the HR team are available to assist in the search for a suitable coach. Upwards feedback can be initiated by both group leaders and their teams. This is carried out by an external consultant and is strictly confidential.

Conclusion

HITS is committed to fostering an inclusive, diverse, and supportive working environment in which all employees and researchers can thrive and develop their full potential. Through continuous evaluation, targeted measures, and an open dialogue on equality and equity, HITS aims to further strengthen equal opportunities and ensure a respectful and welcoming research culture for everyone.

Heidelberg, October 2026

Gesa Schönberger, Managing Director

Kai Polsterer, Scientific Director