

TOGETHER FOR GENDER EQUALITY

An initiative of the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (dffb, German Film and Television Academy Berlin), the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg, the Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF (Film University Babelsberg), the Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film München (HFF, University for Television and Film Munich), the internationale filmschule köln (ifs), and the Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln (KHM, Academy of Media Arts Cologne)

“It’s obviously the case that there are too few women directing films. And we need to find out how we can best change that. It has always been important to me to know strong films by such women as Andrea Arnold. They are role models, to realize: That can be achieved.”

(Maren Ade, director of such films as Toni Erdmann, in an interview with the Stuttgarter Nachrichten)

Women in film and television are clearly under-represented – both in front of the camera and behind it – in nearly all film crafts and, particularly, in such traditionally male-staffed areas of film production as producing, cinematography, sound, or even the VFX department.

- If the film schools admit nearly equal numbers of female and male students, why is there such a drastic shift in the ratio later on, in professional practice?
- How can the involved parties be sensitized to gender as a criterion, on the structural level, as well as with regard to content?
- To what extent can film schools act as models, in this context, and thus provide impulses to the industry?
- How can the criterion gender give rise to a more comprehensive understanding of equal opportunity in the sense of diversity, in order to offer all university members the opportunity of participation and individual self-actualization?

This offers ample reason for the major German film schools to take a common stance, with the aim of creating an awareness of the on-screen representation of gender identity, to empower women for the movie business, and to signal, within university structures: The thought and work performed here is gender-equitable!

KNOWLEDGE: Gender in education and research

“Gender’ is created by applying cultural symbols to individuals and objects. Words are such cultural symbols, but they can also be colors, forms, sounds. Some of them are less unambiguous than words, but perhaps more powerful in their sensual effect. On the whole, these kinds of symbols create historically changing imaginations of femininity and masculinity.”

(Andreas Dorschel, <http://genderforschung.kug.ac.at/zentrum-fuer-genderforschung>)

Since we have all grown up in this society and are predisposed to take many things as “natural”, special awareness of the criterion gender is required in all areas of filmmaking. This applies equally to the organizational level (e.g. on-set childcare, family-friendly working hours, fair distribution of finances), as to the artistic realization of content, in all departments (e.g. casting, attribution of competence to female and male actors, reproduction of (discriminating) stereotypes in figures and narratives, portrayal of violence). Our universities already offer education aimed at arousing in our students an awareness of the topic gender within their particular craft and beyond. We strive to make these course offerings sustainable, to expand and strengthen them by developing an inter-university network, and by exchanging educational content and instructors. Here are some examples:



Kunsthochschule
für Medien Köln
Academy of
Media Arts Cologne



F I L M A K A D E M I E
B A D E N - W Ü R T T E M B E R G

HOCHSCHULE
FÜR FERNSEHEN UND
FILM MÜNCHEN



Deutsche Film- und
Fernsehakademie Berlin
German Film and
Television Academy Berlin



FILMUNIVERSITÄT
BABELSBERG
KONRAD WOLF



internationale
filmschule köln

Education

- Film history/media studies with a focus on: female directors, gender, transsexuality, visual presentation of the body, gender theory
- Gender and film, gender and genre, sexualized (violence) imagery, gender as a mode of esthetic experience
- Artistic possibilities of filmic presentation: dramatic structure, casting, the body (costumes, make-up), framing and shot breakdown (cinematography), editing gender (montage)
- Master classes, film programs by and with female filmmakers

Research

- Support for student graduation projects – either theoretical-artistic or academic – with gender-related topics
- Support for research by teaching staff on gender and diversity-related topics, and their interfaces (gender – queer theory, migration, ethnicity)

Inter-university events

- Research conference: Babelsberger Salon – First Symposium on Gender/Research/Film, May 2018
- Double conference of European film schools, on gender, diversity and filmmaking, in Amsterdam, November 2018, and Cologne, March 2019

POWER: Gender parity in university structures

“At the beginning of bourgeois society, the philosophers Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottlieb Fichte said, the burgher is always and fundamentally a man. For both reason and the state are by definition male beings. Woman is only matter. Women aren't subjects, they are dependent, immature, and have an innate love instinct that makes them unreliable candidates for public office. (...) This then is the profound foundation of the bourgeois society in which we still live today.”

(from the kick-off speech by Jutta Brückner, Pro Quote Regie, Berlinale 2016)

Why has the number of female professors remained much lower (the NRW Gender Report 2016 found 22 percent of all professors at German universities to be female) than the number of their male colleagues – although there is near female/male parity among the academic staff status group? In management, as well, executive positions are still more frequently occupied by men. Not least because of the exemplary social role of film schools, the various status groups and commissions must strive for gender parity. Another goal is to increase the ratio of female candidates, particularly in the traditionally male-dominated study programs.

EMPOWERMENT: Students and teaching staff

The film schools acknowledge a responsibility to act affirmatively on behalf of the under-represented sex (currently largely women) – including the provision of financial resources. The aim, on the one hand, being to enable students, while still at film school, to already better position themselves in the industry; while, on the other hand, supporting the teaching staff in their professional (academic) careers.

Exemplary formats include:

- Into The Wild – Inter-university Mentoring Program for Female Students and Alumni
- Coaching formats: negotiation skills, rhetoric, self-presentation, leadership competency (with ECTS credits for key skills)
- Formats supporting the coordination of studies, job and family – maternal and parental leave, and flexible career re-entry are still not taken a given, at all times and everywhere.

COMMITMENT: More must be undertaken

As long as there is visible and verifiable gender inequality in the film industry, we have an obligation, as film schools in Germany, to promote young film-talented females in such a manner that they can enter the industry on equal footing and maintain a successful position in the future. We consider gender equality a topic encompassing a productive cooperation between the sexes, as well as reflection about their respective (stereotypical) roles and the corresponding allocation of competencies.

The German film schools consider themselves models with regard to gender parity and the impartment of gender competency. It is among our foremost concerns to convey these impulses to the audiovisual media industry and to society as a whole, as well as to network even more closely with such media industry initiatives as WIFT and Pro Quote. Through the following commitments and statements of intent – to be adapted to suit the specific university context – the above-mentioned universities underscore this aim, while also striving to strengthen collaboration and exchange between the universities.

1. To develop women's support plans and gender equality programs for achieving equal opportunity.
2. To instate gender-conscious appointment procedures (incl. introduction of procedural guidelines, obligatory involvement of the women's representative, proof of gender competency as an obligatory criterion).
3. To raise the ratio of women among new professorship appointments, taking qualification into consideration, in order to achieve female professorship parity.
4. To make gender parity a goal in the appointment of members of admissions commissions and appointment committees.
5. To adequately increase the (financial, personnel) resources of university women's representatives, and introduce women's representatives at private schools.
6. To introduce to the curricula, and consolidate courses for imparting gender competency; as well as to attune all film school departments to the relevance of the subject.
7. To provide continuing education in gender competency for teaching staff members.
8. To offer coaching and mentoring programs for female teaching staff members and students.
9. To support staff research on gender and diversity-related topics.
10. To boost the number of applicants, also to the traditionally male dominated studie programs, with the aim of acceptance parity of students who have passed the artistic aptitude test.
11. To create childcare facilities at all universities.
12. To commit to a zero tolerance principle in dealing with sexualized violence and any form of discrimination.
13. To develop an action plan for each university, with concrete objectives – with target figures and timeframes, financial and manpower resources.
14. To promote networking and exchange between the individuals entrusted with execution at the particular universities.
15. To evaluate in 2020: Documentation of realization of all pledged measures, to be presented in an appropriate public context.

Berlin, Cologne, Ludwigsburg, Munich, and Potsdam; February 2018