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Minutes from the meeting of the Committee on Equality and Diversity on September 4th 2026

Participants: Jesper Wengel (JW), Louise Pape-Haugaard (LPH), Line Randa (LR), Trine Schultz (TS), Mette Mechlenborg (MM), Anne Estrup Olesen (AEO), Christian Schilling (CS), Jakob Stampe (JS) and Kirstine Kjær Mathisen (KKM – minutes keeper).

Other participants: Dennis Jim Frederiksen (DJF).

Cancellation: Birgit Feldtmann (BF).

1. Approval of the agenda

Appendix: Agenda for the committee meeting on September 4th 2026

The agenda was approved.

2. Approval of minutes

Appendix: Minutes of the meeting of the Committee on Equality and Diversity on May 29th 2026

The minutes were approved.

3. Messages from the chairperson

There were no messages from the chairperson.

4. Strategic Action Plan for Equality and Diversity

Appendix 4.1: Case presentation

The committee discussed the revised draft of the strategic action plan for equality and diversity 2026-2029. The discussion had a particular focus on formulations, specification of goals and indicators, and how the efforts can be anchored in the organisation.
Questions were raised as to whether the strategic action plan should be submitted for consultation to relevant committees, including the FSU, the Academic Council and HAMiU, before consideration by the Executive management. Follow-up will be carried out on how the relevant consultations can be ensured. It was also emphasized that the Executive management meeting on November 4 will proceed as scheduled, given that the new action plan is to take effect when the current one expires.

Review of main tracks: Gender and career

There was support for the work on a new common merit framework and for the ambition to take a more nuanced view of scientific careers and potential. It was emphasized that periods of maternity/paternity leave, leave of absence or other relevant employment outside the university must be included in the assessment in relevant cases, so that staff members are not placed at a disadvantage due to periods of complete or partial absence of activity as an academic employee. At the same time, it was emphasized that employment outside the university should not automatically be equated with academic experience but should be able to be included when relevant.

There was also a focus on the fact that the merit framework should highlight broader forms of contributions, including organizational contributions, collaboration, impact and contributions to research environments and organizational culture. It was emphasized that changes to the merit framework do not only solve the underlying causes of gender imbalances, and that assessment practices, culture, management and incentive structures have a very significant impact on subsequent effects.

About job postings, there was a discussion on how to ensure that the new principles are applied in practice. There was interest in investigating the possibilities of random sampling and in using AI tools to support the work without the job postings becoming unnecessarily uniform. It was also pointed out that the local variation between departments and faculties must be respected.

In addition, a proposal was discussed to increase the proportion of women among applicants for associate professor and professor positions from a baseline of 25% to 35%. It was emphasized that such a goal can be an intermediate goal, but should not stand alone, as the overall purpose is to influence the entire career path and the conditions that create imbalances in the pipeline. At the same time, there was a desire for success criteria and indicators to be made clear and easy to understand.

Follow-up:

DJF and KKM are preparing a proposal for a new formulation for the action plan, which will include text on the value of active career years in relation to maternity, leave of absence and other relevant employment outside the university.

Review of main tracks: Language and culture

There was support for the proposed direction for language and culture. It was confirmed that the main track of this action plan is limited to international staffs' language and cultural competences in relation to their jobs at AAU. At the same time, it was noted that there are already initiatives that support Danish staffs' Englishlanguage and intercultural competences.

The possibility of exploring an English language training program for Danish TAP staff was raised. There was also a discussion about the need to link Danish language instruction for international staff more closely to their core responsibilities, such as pedagogical and teaching tasks. It was emphasized that relevant expertise from faculties and departments could be usefully incorporated into this effort.

Review of main tracks: Neurodiversity
Regarding neurodiversity, it was emphasized that the area is relevant across employee groups, and that there is also experience from working with neurodivergent students that can provide inspiration. In particular, the balance between creating inclusiveness within the general framework and ensuring the possibility of support without the individual necessarily having to identify with a diagnosis or enter into special agreements was discussed.

It was determined that AAU's efforts relevant to the Committee on Equality and Diversity in this area should remain exploratory for the time being, and that there is a need to gather more information and draw on relevant professional expertise before more concrete initiatives are established.

Review of main tracks: Local action plans

In the discussion of local action plans, the focus was on how the overall initiatives are implemented so that they can function and influence departments and faculties. It was emphasized that it should be clear what the local units are expected to do, while at the same time there must be the opportunity for local adaptation.

Among other things, there was a desire to formulate more specifically what initiatives are expected at the individual faculties. At the same time, it was discussed that neurodiversity should not be included as a topic in the local action plans, as it is still an area where a better knowledge base must first be established, and that more specific local requirements may therefore come later.

Decision:

The committee agreed with the further direction of the strategic action plan and agreed that the secretariat will incorporate the committee's comments and prepare a comprehensive draft. The complete draft will be submitted to the committee for final approval at the upcoming online meeting on September 15th.

At the same time, the committee agreed with the assessment that AAU's action plan meets the formal requirements of Horizon Europe.

5. Course funds and targets for gender balance

Appendix 5.1: Case presentation regarding course funds

Appendix 5.2: Case presentation on targets for gender balance

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Course Resources

The committee discussed the request for DKK 680,000 for competence development in the form of course activities within diversity, equality and inclusion in the coming strategic action plan period. It was emphasized that the funds must both support AAU's work on gender equality and diversity and be part of the fulfilment of Horizon Europe's requirements for dedicated funds for training and competence development. The amount is calculated based on the length of the coming period and the expected level of activity, corresponding to approximately five full-day courses or eight half-day courses annually.

The committee decided to recommend to the Executive Board that DKK 680,000 be allocated for the purpose.

Targets for gender balance
The committee discussed proposals for new targets for the gender balance for the period 2027-2029. For the external members of the board, it was proposed to maintain the target at 50/50. For managers at levels 1-3, a new target of 60/40 (women/men) was proposed. It was emphasized that trends in gender balance could be tracked more effectively at the level of individual management teams, rather than solely as a single aggregate figure.

There was support for the proposed targets and for their recommendation to the Executive management.

Follow-up:

The case presentations on course funds and target figures for gender balance in senior management and the Board of Directors will be discussed by the Executive mangement on November 4th 2026, in connection with the approval of the strategic action plan.

More detailed figures for the gender balance in the individual management groups will be followed up, which will be presented to the committee for information and discussion at the next committee meeting on November 24th 2026.

6. Processing of enquiries about Hidden Disabilities Sunflower lanyards at AAU

Appendix 6.1: Case presentation on sunflower lanyards

The Committee discussed the request for the possibility of offering sunflower lanyards as a voluntary initiative for staff and students. There was overall support for the purpose and for AAU to relate to the possibility. At the same time, it was noted that the sunflower lanyard is already used by some students and staff at AAU. Several issues were pointed out that should be clarified before a decision is made on a possible implementation.

Among other things, it was emphasized that information should accompany the possible realization of initiatives, so that managers, teachers and other staff members know how to behave when a person is wearing a sunflower lanyard. It was also pointed out that volunteering is crucial and that the initiative must not create indirect pressure to make personal circumstances visible. Finally, it was discussed what expectations such an initiative can create regarding consideration and special treatment, and whether AAU is ready to meet these expectations.

It was agreed that the matter should be investigated further, including through experiences from DTU and possibly other comparable organizations.

Follow-up:

A more detailed case presentation will be prepared with experiences from other organizations, including communication, implementation, resource needs and any challenges. The case will be re-discussed in the ULD with a view to assessing whether further work should be done on a possible pilot.

7. Communications from the Committee and any other business

It was informed that the recommendation is to integrate the inclusion survey into the upcoming staff well-being barometer. Such a solution can allow for a fixed measurement and a better opportunity to follow developments over time, while at the same time ensuring that employees do not have to deal with several separate surveys. This recommendation must be approved by HAMiU on September 14th 2026.

The background is, among other things, that the existing data basis from the inclusion survey in 2022 is insufficient to carry out a direct comparison. Several data are missing or fragmented, and parts of both the qualitative and quantitative data are no longer available to us at AAU. It was also informed that a break-even analysis will be carried out in the autumn among international staff, which can interact with the further work on inclusion issues in the staff well-being barometer and the strategic action plan.