

# Gender Equality Plan

**2020 - 2025**

***(1st stage)***

Autor\*innen

Prof. Dr. Susanne Boll-Westermann      OFFIS e. V.

Ann-Kathrin Sobeck-Martens              OFFIS e. V.

Dr.-Ing. Wilko Heuten                      OFFIS e.V.

# Index

- Preamble ..... 1
- 1 Introduction..... 2
  - 1.1 Gender Equality at OFFIS ..... 2
- 2 Auditing the state of gender equality at OFFIS ..... 3
  - 2.1 National and regional laws and other regulations ..... 3
    - 2.1.1 Legal mandate for gender equality ..... 3
    - 2.1.2 OFFIS Mission Statement ..... 4
    - 2.1.3 Target Agreement with the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture (MWK) ..... 4
  - 2.2 Data collection ..... 4
    - 2.2.1 Gender Check ..... 4
- 3 Planning the OFFIS Gender Equality Strategy ..... 4
- 4 Implementing the OFFIS Gender Equality Strategy ..... 5
  - 4.1 Develop the organizational culture ..... 5
    - 4.1.1 Implementing the diversity dimension into the organizational chart..... 5
    - 4.1.2 Guide for Gender Sensitive Language ..... 5
    - 4.1.3 Corporate agreement on flexitime ..... 5
    - 4.1.4 Corporate agreement on remote work..... 5
    - 4.1.5 Advice and support on work-life balance..... 5
  - 4.2 Approach different leadership models ..... 6
    - 4.2.1 Tandem group leadership ..... 6
    - 4.2.2 Development Dialogues ..... 6
    - 4.2.3 Unconscious bias workshops..... 6
  - 4.3 Gender equality in recruitment and employer branding ..... 6
    - 4.3.1 Adapting the job offers..... 6
    - 4.3.2 Visual language..... 6
    - 4.3.3 Adapting the selection process ..... 7
    - 4.3.4 Identify and promote female talents ..... 7
  - 4.4 Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content ..... 7
    - 4.4.1 Overall Research Approach ..... 7
    - 4.4.2 User Research and Studies ..... 7
    - 4.4.3 Teaching ..... 8
    - 4.4.4 Division “Society” ..... 8

4.5	Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.....	8
5	Controlling and evaluation .....	9
5.1	Share of women in % in various employee groups per year .....	9
6	Annex.....	9
6.1	Measures 2020 .....	9
6.2	Measures 2021 .....	9
6.3	Measures 2022 .....	10
6.4	Upcoming Measures 2023 .....	10
7	Table of Figures .....	11

## Preamble

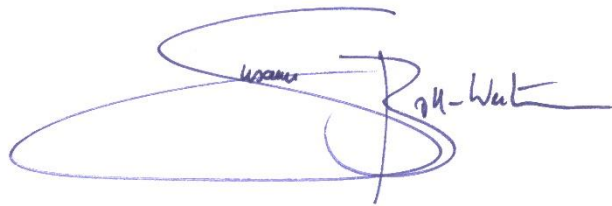
The OFFIS – Institute for Information Technology is committed to promoting and improving gender equality at all career levels within the institute. Gender equality aims to prevent discrimination in part by balancing the proportion of the different genders at the workplace, and also by maintaining a respectful work relationship to each other without conscious or unconscious gender biases. It therefore is important to raise awareness within the institute for gender equality, discrimination and unconscious biases.

The following plan has been prepared after a thorough analysis of the statistical figures and is the results of an institute-wide survey on the topic of gender equality. This plan is effective for the years 2020 -2025 and it defines the framework and the measures that will be followed at our institute. A successful implementation of this plan can only be achieved if all employees commit to it. We therefore invite all our colleagues to support and promote the goals and measures we define in this plan.

Oldenburg, October 2022



Prof. Dr. Sebastian Lehnhoff  
(Chairman of the Board)



Prof. Dr. Susanne Boll-Westermann  
(Member of the Board)



Prof. Dr.-Ing. Andreas Hein  
(Member of the Board)



Dr. Holger Peinemann  
(CEO)



Ann-Kathrin Sobeck-Martens  
(Diversity Representative)

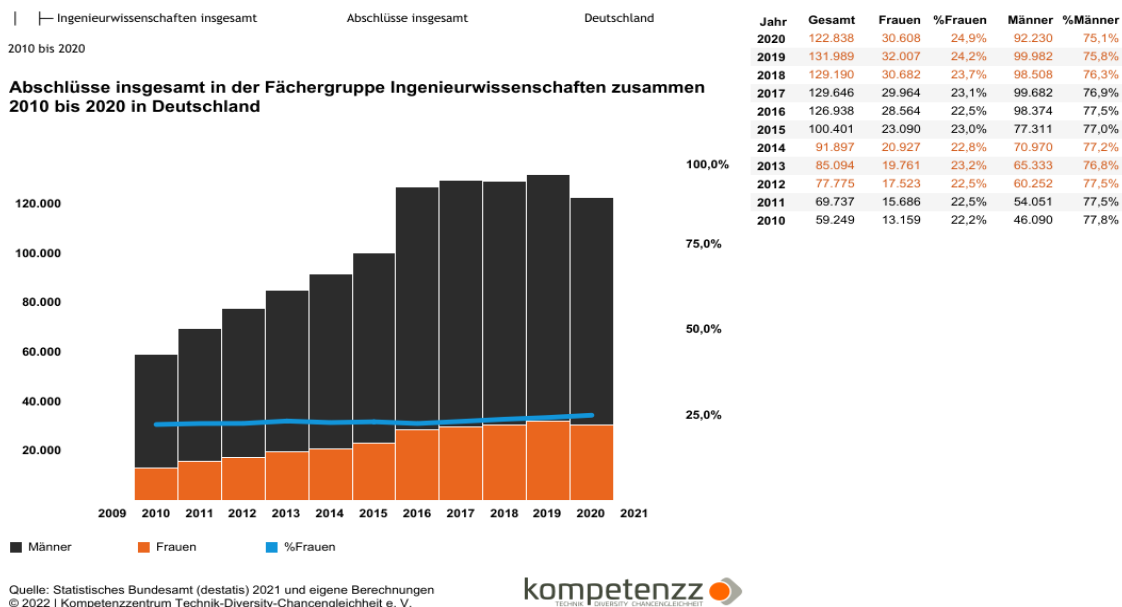
# 1 Introduction

OFFIS is a nationally and internationally visible research and development institute in Lower Saxony in the field of computer science. As an affiliated institute of the Carl von Ossietzky University, which also conducts basic research that is indispensable for us, we conduct application-oriented research as well as science and technology transfer in society, business and administration.

## 1.1 Gender Equality at OFFIS

Our respectful and at the same time professional interaction with each other is characterized by mutual trust, openness and commitment. Decisions are presented as transparently as possible. We promote individual development opportunities and the compatibility of family and career.

Diversity and equal opportunities are a core value of the research institute. OFFIS members and staff, especially those in leadership roles, pay careful attention to gender balance in all events and committees that OFFIS organizes or in which OFFIS participates. In doing so, the Executive Board, the scientific directors, and the OFFIS staff proactively advocate for an active and appropriate participation of women in these events: Where we are co-responsible for conferences (e.g. as General Chair or Program Chair), we clearly and actively advocate for an appropriate participation of women in the organizing committees. Where we can help to shape this, we work to ensure that expert committees are staffed in a balanced gender ratio. The OFFIS Institute for Information Technology hence strives to have a balanced ratio of female and male scientists shaping the research and development of our common digital future.



Prüfungsjahre bestehen aus dem jeweiligen Sommersemester und dem vorhergehenden Wintersemester (PJ 2015 = SS 2015 + WS 2014/2015).

Seit dem Wintersemester 2015/16 ist die Informatik Teil der Ingenieurwissenschaften, dadurch starke Verschiebung der Zahlen weg von Mathematik, Naturwissenschaften.

**Hinweis zu den verfügbaren Zeiträumen:** Hochschuldaten auf Bundesländerebene sind erst ab dem Jahr 2008 verfügbar, auf Bundesebene hingegen schon ab 1973 für die Abschlüsse und ab 1975 für die Studierenden. Bachelor und Master wurden erst im Jahr 2000 eingeführt.

Figure 1: Total number of degrees in STEM subjects in Germany 2010-2020

However, we have to relate this goal to the number of candidates in computer science who identify as women. While a higher share would be our ambition, current statistics of German graduations in computer science and computer science-related subjects show that the proportion of women among graduates in 2019 can be described as a very benevolent 25%. Thus, one can at least well expect that the OFFIS - Institute of Information Technology would also have a proportion of 25% women in all of its scientific positions and committees. Unfortunately, this percentage is not reflected in the figures of the past years and has been such for years. Individual measures over the course of time did not bring a desired change. Hence it became clear that this would only evolve with a strategic plan for gender equality. OFFIS cannot influence all the roots of this situation by its own, but it can still bring about a change in its institutes culture. A great quote on this comes from Carnegie Mellon University's February 2019 report on "How Computer Science at CMU Is Attracting and Retaining Women":

*"In a nutshell, for women to be successful in CS we needed to change the culture and environment, and develop and sustain programs that work to level the playing field without making women feel like a separate species."*

This statement can also be found in various other scientific publications. As long as women are the exception, they are usually treated as an exception - and do not see this as an environment they choose to work in. Therefore, measures to achieve a proportion of 25% women at all levels of OFFIS cannot rely solitarily on an intensive recruitment of women in scientific positions, but by a cultural change within the institute and its environment. OFFIS faced this task with a board resolution to implement a Gender Equality Strategy as an institute wide strategy on 01 July 2019.

## 2 Auditing the state of gender equality at OFFIS

### 2.1 National and regional laws and other regulations

#### 2.1.1 Legal mandate for gender equality

The mandate to realize equal rights and equal opportunities for all genders is derived from the Basic Law Art. 3, the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG), the Lower Saxony Constitution Art. 3 and the Lower Saxony Equal Opportunities Act (§§ 4-6, 10-14, 15-17). The mandate for action is particularly directed towards the actual implementation of equal opportunities for all genders, the elimination of existing disadvantages and the compatibility of family and career. To achieve gender equality, the Committee for Science and Culture of the Lower Saxony State Parliament takes a concrete position:

*"The mandate contained in the Lower Saxony constitution to realize equal rights for women and men requires, under the current circumstances, measures that are predominantly characterized by elements that promote women."*

This is also the explicit opinion of OFFIS.

Furthermore, all provisions for gender equality in research and innovation will contribute directly to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>), and to all SDGs, as gender equality is a necessary foundation across SDGs.

### 2.1.2 OFFIS Mission Statement

Under the point "Responsibility", the principle of equal opportunities is integral part of the OFFIS mission statement:

*"All employees are committed to ensuring that people are not disadvantaged or defamed because of their skin color, origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or impairments. We explicitly promote equal rights and inclusion of all people."*

### 2.1.3 Target Agreement with the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture (MWK)

Realizing gender equality also is a part of the target agreements 2020-2024 with the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture (MWK). And OFFIS has agreed to fill 25% of its scientific positions and scientific committees with women.

## 2.2 Data collection

### 2.2.1 Gender Check

The OFFIS board made a resolution to implement gender equality measures on 01 July 2019 and commissioned a specific survey – the so-called "Gender Check" - at the agency "Fe:male Leadership Development (FLD)". The combination of a quantitative analysis and qualitative methods provided a comprehensive picture of the status quo of gender equality within our organization.

Objectives of the 'Gender Check':

- > Analysis of relevant key processes and corporate structures for gender fairness.
- > Identification of levers and fields of action.
- > Evaluation potential for optimization and derivation of quick wins and medium/long-term measures.

Approach: The 'Gender Check' was a multistage procedure.

- > Survey of artefacts related to women & careers along the HR Value-Chain using checklists
- > Conducting semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders, in order to identify relevant barriers on the organizational cultural level (values, norms, biases, etc.)
- > Derivation of hypotheses
- > Identification of fields of action and derivation of measures.

## 3 Planning the OFFIS Gender Equality Strategy

As a main objective OFFIS wants to reach a more even gender distribution not only within the staff members but also within management. But there are a lot more aspects of diversity and gender equality which the institute needs to improve to increase employee satisfaction and attractiveness as an employer. Based on the 'Gender Check' results, the following objectives were identified and will be part of the first stage of the OFFIS Gender Equality Strategy from 2020 to 2025:

- > Develop the organizational culture
- > Approach different leadership models
- > Gender equality in recruitment and employer branding
- > Integrate the gender dimension into research and teaching content
- > Define measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

## **4 Implementing the OFFIS Gender Equality Strategy**

### **4.1 Develop the organizational culture**

By starting the discussion on gender equality via the 'Gender Check', the awareness for the role of women in the institute was sharpened rapidly and starting points for improvement became apparent. The following measures were identified as contribution to a further development of our organizational culture.

#### **4.1.1 Implementing the diversity dimension into the organizational chart**

In June 2022 the diversity dimension was integrated into the institutes organizational chart to emphasize the importance of this subject. A responsible position has been designated in the HR department and budget for the development of a diversity concept for 2023 has been assigned.

#### **4.1.2 Guide for Gender Sensitive Language**

Gender-sensitive language shows appreciation for all people, regardless of their gender. By addressing and naming people of all genders, stereotyped role models are eliminated. Therefore, in April 2020 the "Guide for Gender Sensitive Language" was published in the OFFIS-Intranet and the use of gender-sensitive language in the institute was advised. Gender-sensitive language since then is used without exceptions in all of the institute's internal and external communication channels.

#### **4.1.3 Corporate agreement on flexitime**

Flexible working time arrangements are crucial for the compatibility of family and career for all genders. In order to provide employees with the greatest possible flexibility in the organization of their working hours, OFFIS and the OFFIS works council established flexitime in a corporate agreement in July 2019.

#### **4.1.4 Corporate agreement on remote work**

Modern forms of work organization should ensure and promote a self-determined organization of working hours as well as the compatibility of family and career through the choice of work location. OFFIS supports employees in freely choosing the work organization that is optimal for them and leaves it up to the employees where they would like to perform a significant part of their work. The goal of a trusting cooperation within the framework of a self-determined organization of the working hours and the place of work is jointly pursued by OFFIS and the OFFIS works council through the company agreement on remote work, which was agreed in November 2020. Its conditions support massively the compatibility of family and career for all genders. Remote work became a natural opportunity and the practices around

#### **4.1.5 Advice and support on work-life balance**

Especially during the covid-19 pandemic, organizational advice and support on work-life balance was a main issue. Therefore, the OFFIS corporate health management offered and still offers together with health insurance companies events and information to support the employees. Also the OFFIS executives always strive to improve personally difficult and challenging situations for their staff members by flexible solutions adapted to the actual needs.



## **4.2 Approach different leadership models**

### **4.2.1 Tandem group leadership**

To reach the goal of increasing the number and share of women in leadership, OFFIS closely looked at its leadership models. The tandem group leadership model was identified as a flexible model for junior staff development and at the same time as a possibility to create more family-friendly leadership positions at OFFIS. A pilot test phase of 18 months was started in the OFFIS energy division in March 2021. The leadership team is coached during the pilot phase and in quarterly retrospectives the development of the group is monitored. The pilot test has been extended and is expected to end in mid-2023. A final evaluation will be published.

### **4.2.2 Development Dialogues**

The practice of annual reviews in the institute was reconsidered in 2021 and evolved from an agreement on objectives to a development dialogue between the participants. During the process, workshops for management were held to introduce and implement the idea of the yearly dialogues as a platform to identify talents and to speak about career development with every employee regardless of gender. As a tool for this, the guidelines for development dialogues were published and applied in the annual reviews held at the end of 2021 or the beginning of 2022. The whole process was positively evaluated in 2022 and will be continued.

### **4.2.3 Unconscious bias workshops**

To tackle unconscious bias in the personnel assessment and discuss development opportunities at management level, a first workshop was held in April 2021. All management levels participated: board members, directors of our R&D divisions as well as the group managers. Workshops on diversity and gender biases for all employees were initiated, were held twice in 2021 and will be held twice a year to continuously raise the awareness for these issues.

## **4.3 Gender equality in recruitment and employer branding**

In August 2020 the development of a concept for gender-sensitive employer branding and recruitment started. Our aims are an increased targeting of potential female employees, a substantial increase in the number of female applicants and more objectivity in the recruiting and also the promotion process.

### **4.3.1 Adapting the job offers**

Different aspects of the job offers were considered and the layout, content and language were reviewed to avoid biases. The job advertisements were edited accordingly and family-friendly aspects were integrated for the first time. With the new OFFIS career portal going live in 2022, key figures on gender aspects in recruiting will be introduced and continually evaluated.

### **4.3.2 Visual language**

The visibility of people of all genders in the visual language of an organization is decisive for its perception and attraction as an employer. This is why OFFIS attaches importance to diversity in its visual language. This has already been part of the marketing strategy for years when selecting pictures for social media as well as print media like our house magazine or the annual report. But it is also part of the advice for our colleagues given by the marketing team during the selection process for pictures for presentations to raise the awareness in this field.

### 4.3.3 Adapting the selection process

The quality of the job interview is a critical decision criterion for applicants and therefore of really high importance for every organization. The interview quality was one point we therefore decided to look at more closely. The result were several measures: A guideline for job interviews was developed and introduced. This tool helps to avoid unconscious biases, clearly defines processes and increases therefore transparency. Also an interview skills training for executives was held in 2021 to raise the awareness for gender biases. This kind of training will be part of the ongoing and long-term process.

### 4.3.4 Identify and promote female talents

Part of the gender diversity strategy is a systematic increase of women in senior roles such as senior researcher, group leader and division leader. The target is - as is the same for the whole institute - to achieve at least 25% senior positions in the scientific divisions filled with women. The strategic measures therefore naturally include, on the one hand, increased efforts in recruiting to boost the number of female talents. But on the other hand, greater attention is also being paid to identifying and promoting the talent already available in-house and addressing this with the help of measures in the areas of mentoring, support and coaching. For example special coaching sessions to encourage and support female talents on their way to a leadership position or also ones already in a leadership role were introduced. Furthermore, the connection between female scientists in the institute is supported by establishing a network, which invites regularly to meetups and events. Furthermore, unconscious bias trainings were offered to the executives to raise awareness for e.g. job interviews, the complete recruiting process, the annual development dialogues etc.

## 4.4 Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

### 4.4.1 Overall Research Approach

A large body of our research activities involve humans. Particular the research areas “Human-Machine Interaction/Mixed Reality”, “Human-Centred AI” as well as “Assistive Technologies for Care and Health Professionals” explicitly consider sex differences and promote gender equality research. Our research involving humans proactively follow the Human Centred Design for Interactive System Approach (ISO 9241-210:2019: Ergonomics of human-system interaction — Part 210: Human-centred design for interactive systems<sup>1</sup>). This approach requires to explicitly understand the needs and requirements of the target users and to involve these in the different phases or research and development: context analysis, user requirements analysis, designing solutions and conducting evaluations. This process ensures that users independent from gender, culture, origin or capabilities are considered in our research. It also requests an interdisciplinary research team to involve experts from different research areas to integrate the different perspectives into the development of our developed interactive systems.

### 4.4.2 User Research and Studies

Based on the above general research approach, we conduct studies with users and experts. Methods that we apply are interviews, focus groups, ethnographic studies, participatory design studies, different types of usability studies and experiments. Our overall goal with these studies is to gain more knowledge about how to improve the usability, user experience, acceptance and outcome of our

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.iso.org/standard/77520.html>

systems during everyday use for the intended target group. Whenever, the target group is not defined by a specific gender, we aim for a balanced gender split in all of our studies, in order to avoid any gender bias. This is also one of the major requirements for the acceptance of our research at the different research publication venues (conferences, journals). Thus it is important for us to ensure a gender neutral recruitment. When addressing potential test persons, we always use gender equal language and we address sources to recruit test persons, which allow us to fulfil a balanced gender split. In the analysis of our studies, we identify potential issues based on gender, in order to consider and minimize these in future research and development.

OFFIS has established its own ethical review board. All studies in OFFIS are reviewed through this interdisciplinary board with regard to ethical and legal issues.

#### **4.4.3 Teaching**

OFFIS is teaching in cooperation with the University of Oldenburg, Germany. It involves supervision of bachelor and master theses, lectures and labs.

#### **4.4.4 Division “Society”**

OFFIS has founded April 2022 a new division “Society”, which addresses societal issues in connection with digitization. Diversity, inclusion and participation play an important role for any research activity in this division. This can only be achieved together with institutes and experts from social sciences. Therefore, many research projects in this division involve external scientists with a research focus on specific aspects of social sciences. In these projects the impact of the digital transformation on our different living and working areas are investigated. Gender aspects are explicitly considered, when designing solutions that need to be adapted to the individual needs and life stages (e.g. school, family, career). Current research and network projects research specifically how girls in the age of 10-16 years can be attracted to STEM and specifically to computer science.

### **4.5 Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment**

As stated in the OFFIS mission statement, the institute explicitly promotes equal rights and inclusion of all people. Therefore, gender-based violence is absolutely intolerable for us. Our staff members find information about the processes regarding these issues and support options in our intranet and victims are supported in any possible way by the named contact persons and institutions.

## 5 Controlling and evaluation

### 5.1 Share of women in % in various employee groups per year

Staff group	2020	2021	2022
Board Members	16,67	20,00	33,33
CEO	0,00	0,00	0,00
Members Scientific Council	12,50	12,50	14,29
Members Executive Boards	18,18	20,00	25,00
Division Directors	0,00	0,00	0,00
Group managers	5,00	6,25	16,67
Researchers	26,63	32,50	33,60
Student Research Assistants	24,66	20,41	14,89
Management staff	57,14	56,10	56,10
Temporary staff	25,00	25,00	33,33
Apprentices	0,00	50,00	40,00
Total	27,17	30,42	31,18

Table 1: Development of the share of women in the staff groups

As OFFIS aims for a 25%-share of women staff members on all levels of the institutes' hierarchy, these numbers indicate, if and where the development is successful. These numbers are evaluated by the end of every year and are part of the staff development plans.

## 6 Annex

### 6.1 Measures 2020

- > 01/2020 Contracting FLD Female Leadership Development
- > 03/2020 Offering individual coaching sessions for female staff members
- > 04/2020 Publication of the "Guide for Gender Sensitive Language" in the OFFIS-Intranet and use of gender-sensitive language in the institute
- > 04/2020 Start of the survey by FLD of the status quo along the HR value chain together with the OFFIS HR Development
- > 05/2020 Stakeholder-Interviews "Gender Culture Check"
- > 06/2020 Presentation of the results for the board
- > 07/2020 Decision on the measures for 2020 and 2021
- > 08/2020 Concept development Employer Branding & Recruiting
- > 11/2020 Development new leadership concept "Tandem Group Management"
- > 12/2021 Planning of the workshops for 2021

### 6.2 Measures 2021

- > 03/2021 Launch of the pilot of the new leadership concept "Tandem Group Management"
- > 04/2021 Executive Workshop "Successfully leading diverse teams" to raise awareness on diversity, gender equality and unconscious gender biases on management level
- > 06/2021 1st Training "Successful together – Diversity in teams" to raise awareness on diversity, gender equality and unconscious gender biases for all staff members
- > 07/2021 Job interview training for all management levels

- > 09/2021 1st interim evaluation “Tandem Group Management”
- > 10/2021 Trainings “Annual employee appraisal as development dialog” for all management levels
- > 11/2021 Introduction of new layout for the job advertisements
- > 11/2021 2nd Training “Successful together – Diversity in teams” to raise awareness on diversity, gender equality and unconscious gender biases for all staff members

### **6.3 Measures 2022**

- > 04/2022 Feedback collection on new annual employee appraisals and evaluation
- > 03/2022: 2nd interim evaluation “Tandem Group Management”
- > 06/2022: Implementation of Diversity in the organizational chart
- > 06/2022 1st Training “Successful together – Diversity in teams” to raise awareness on diversity, gender equality and unconscious gender biases for all staff members
- > 11/2022 2nd Training “Successful together – Diversity in teams” to raise awareness on diversity, gender equality and unconscious gender biases for all staff members

### **6.4 Upcoming Measures 2023**

- > Final evaluation “Tandem Group Management”
- > Implementation “Diversity Concept”
- > 2x Training “Successful together – Diversity in teams” to raise awareness on diversity, gender equality and unconscious gender biases for all staff members
- > Female talent training days via the Female scientists @OFFIS network

## 7 Table of Figures

Graphic 1: Total number of degrees in STEM subjects in Germany 2010-2020**Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.**