



## **Interview with Stephanie Verbeet, Head of the Judiciary and the Service for Professorships**

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Information des Online-Portals zu sexualisierter Diskriminierung und Gewalt an der Hochschule,

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### **What is my role at the university?**

I am the head of the judiciary and the professorship service. I also represent the complaints office § 13 AGG (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz).

### **What is important with regard to the Allgemeine Gleichbehandlungsgesetz when we look at sexualized discrimination and violence?**

With the equal treatment act [Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz \(AGG\)](#), in 2006, four European equal treatment guidelines were implemented in German law. The aim of the law is to prevent or eliminate disadvantages based on ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual identity. The AGG regulates the claims and legal consequences of discrimination both for working life and for civil law. Sexual harassment is considered a “disadvantage” within AGG if an undesired, sexually determined behavior, which also includes unwanted sexual acts and requests to do so, includes sexually determined physical touch, comments of sexual content, as well as unwanted showing and visible attachment of pornographic representations or causes the dignity of the person concerned to be violated, especially if an environment characterized by intimidation, hostility, degradation or insult is created.

If you are exposed to such a disadvantage, you can contact me directly as a complaints office according to § 13 AGG. I am responsible for all employees. The AGG provides three essential rights for those affected: the Beschwerderecht (right to file a complaint), § 13 AGG, das Leistungsverweigerungsrecht (right to refuse to work), § 14 AGG, as well as Anspruch auf Entschädigung und Schadensersatz (right to compensation), §15 AGG. As an employer, the Leuphana University of Lüneburg is legally obliged to protect victims of discrimination by examining the content of every complaint about sexual harassment and, after the incident has been clarified and if the discrimination has been confirmed, the appropriate and necessary measures to prevent disadvantages in individual cases must be taken. The person making the complaint must not suffer any operational disadvantages. If no or obviously unsuitable measures are taken to prevent harassment or sexual harassment at the workplace, the employees concerned are entitled to cease their work without loss of earnings, insofar as this is necessary for their protection. In some cases,

those affected can also claim compensation from their employer. The prerequisite for this is that the employer is responsible for the damage.

**What usually happens after a complaint is filed?**

As an AGG complaints office, I have an obligation to investigate an incident if it is brought up to me (assessment of the current situation). I take a neutral and objective stance and make sure that the incident is viewed and resolved from all angles. The exact procedure depends on the circumstances of the individual case. I will usually request a statement or seek a conversation with the person whose behavior is the subject of the complaint. Then it may be necessary to have a conversation with the applicant again in order to obtain further information for clarification. Finally, I evaluate the information gathered about the incident. If it turns out that there is actually discrimination within the meaning of the AGG, the necessary and appropriate measures are taken to prevent disadvantage in individual cases.

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