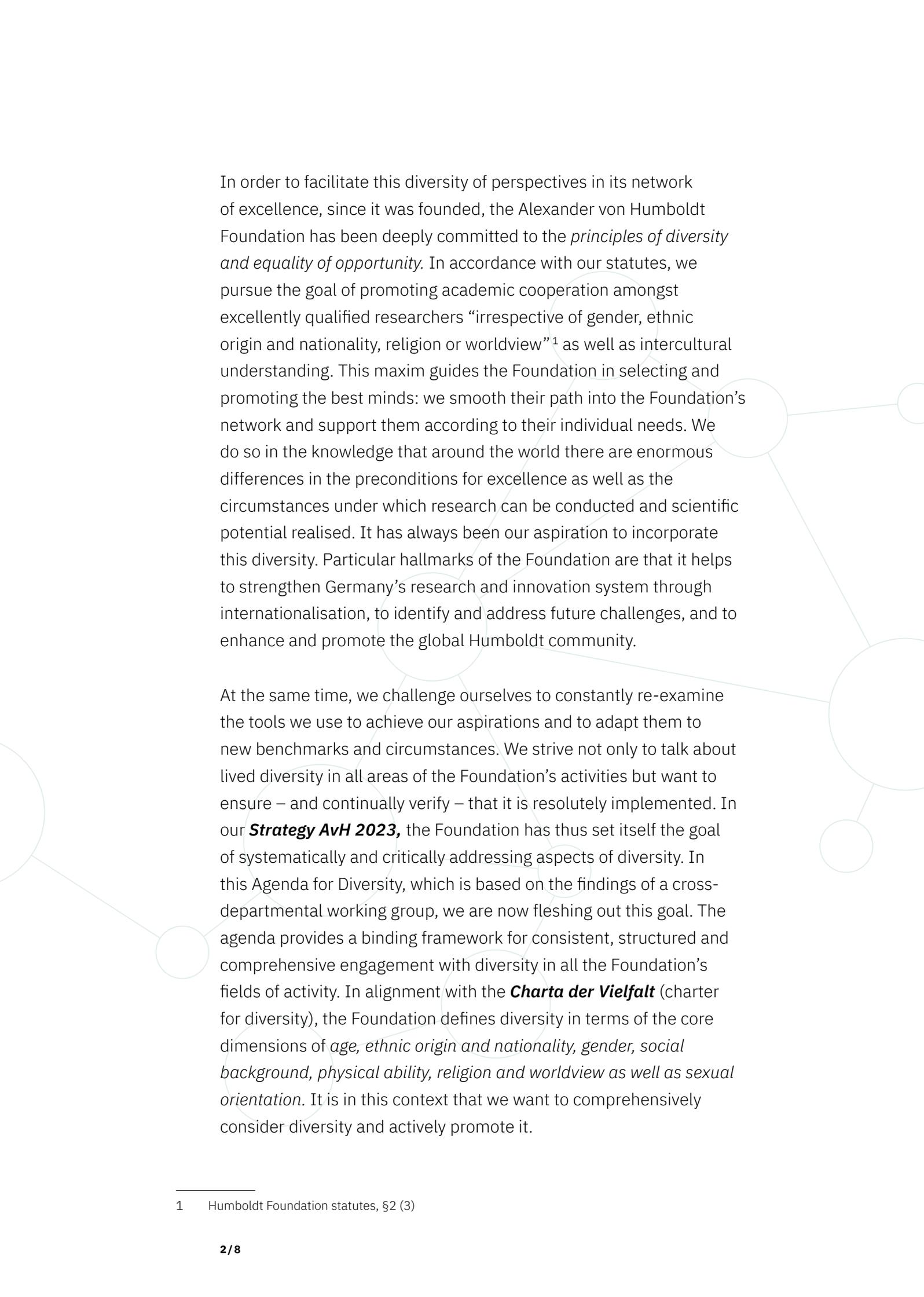




Diversity **for Excellence**

Alexander von Humboldt Foundation: Agenda for Lived Diversity

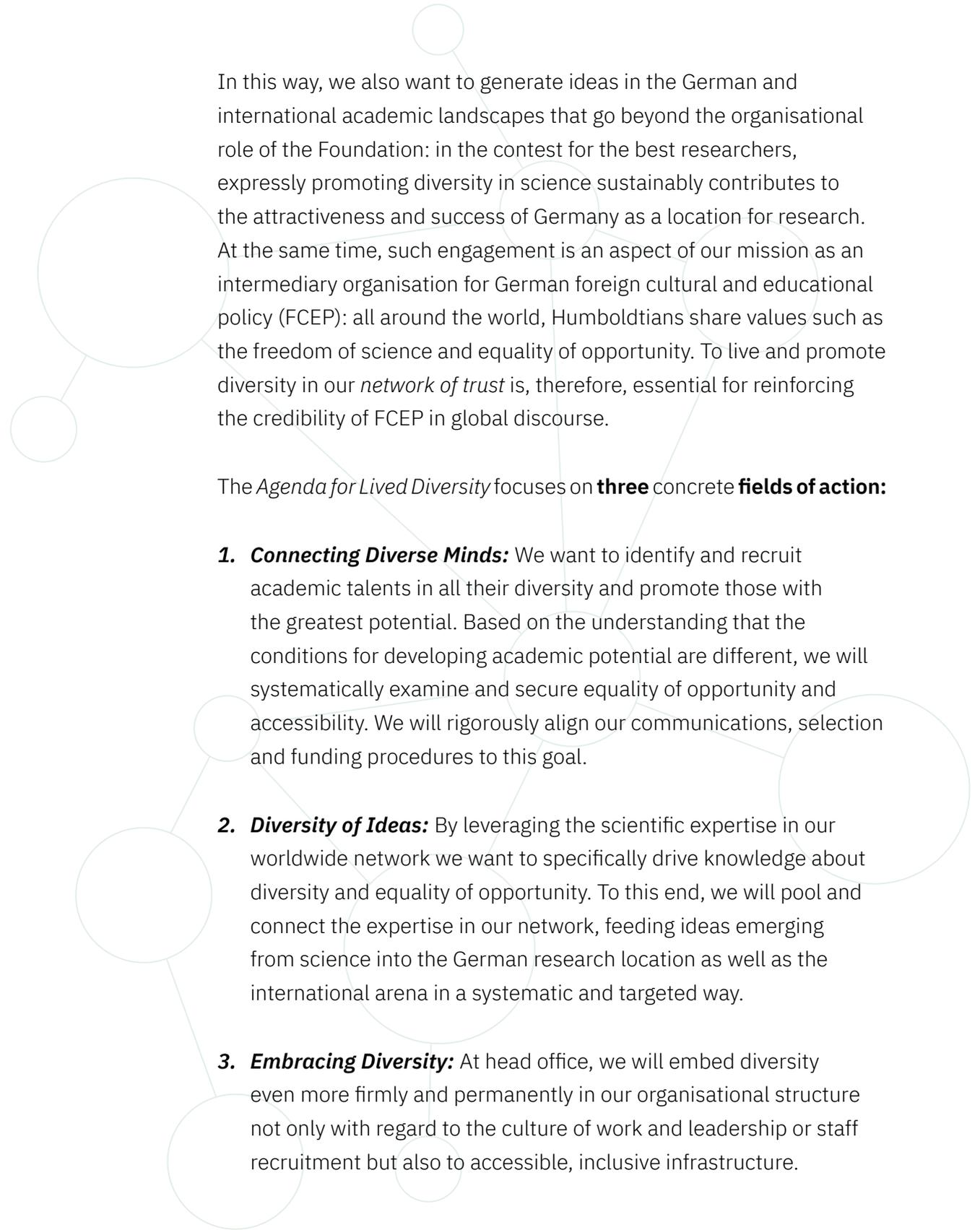
One of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation's founding principles is to identify and bring together outstanding research personalities from all countries and disciplines without applying quotas. The Foundation's sponsorship recipients spend time in Germany cooperating on research with specialist colleagues and becoming active members of the worldwide Humboldt Network. Academic excellence, that is, the outstanding accomplishments of individual researchers as well as prospective leaders from science-related sectors, is the Foundation's guiding principle. It provides the framework in which the diversity of individuals, subjects, schools of thought and discourse can generate outstanding ideas. This diversity of perspectives is indispensable if we are to expand the limits of known knowledge together and find solutions to the urgent issues facing the world.



In order to facilitate this diversity of perspectives in its network of excellence, since it was founded, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation has been deeply committed to the *principles of diversity and equality of opportunity*. In accordance with our statutes, we pursue the goal of promoting academic cooperation amongst excellently qualified researchers “irrespective of gender, ethnic origin and nationality, religion or worldview”¹ as well as intercultural understanding. This maxim guides the Foundation in selecting and promoting the best minds: we smooth their path into the Foundation’s network and support them according to their individual needs. We do so in the knowledge that around the world there are enormous differences in the preconditions for excellence as well as the circumstances under which research can be conducted and scientific potential realised. It has always been our aspiration to incorporate this diversity. Particular hallmarks of the Foundation are that it helps to strengthen Germany’s research and innovation system through internationalisation, to identify and address future challenges, and to enhance and promote the global Humboldt community.

At the same time, we challenge ourselves to constantly re-examine the tools we use to achieve our aspirations and to adapt them to new benchmarks and circumstances. We strive not only to talk about lived diversity in all areas of the Foundation’s activities but want to ensure – and continually verify – that it is resolutely implemented. In our **Strategy AvH 2023**, the Foundation has thus set itself the goal of systematically and critically addressing aspects of diversity. In this Agenda for Diversity, which is based on the findings of a cross-departmental working group, we are now fleshing out this goal. The agenda provides a binding framework for consistent, structured and comprehensive engagement with diversity in all the Foundation’s fields of activity. In alignment with the **Charta der Vielfalt** (charter for diversity), the Foundation defines diversity in terms of the core dimensions of *age, ethnic origin and nationality, gender, social background, physical ability, religion and worldview as well as sexual orientation*. It is in this context that we want to comprehensively consider diversity and actively promote it.

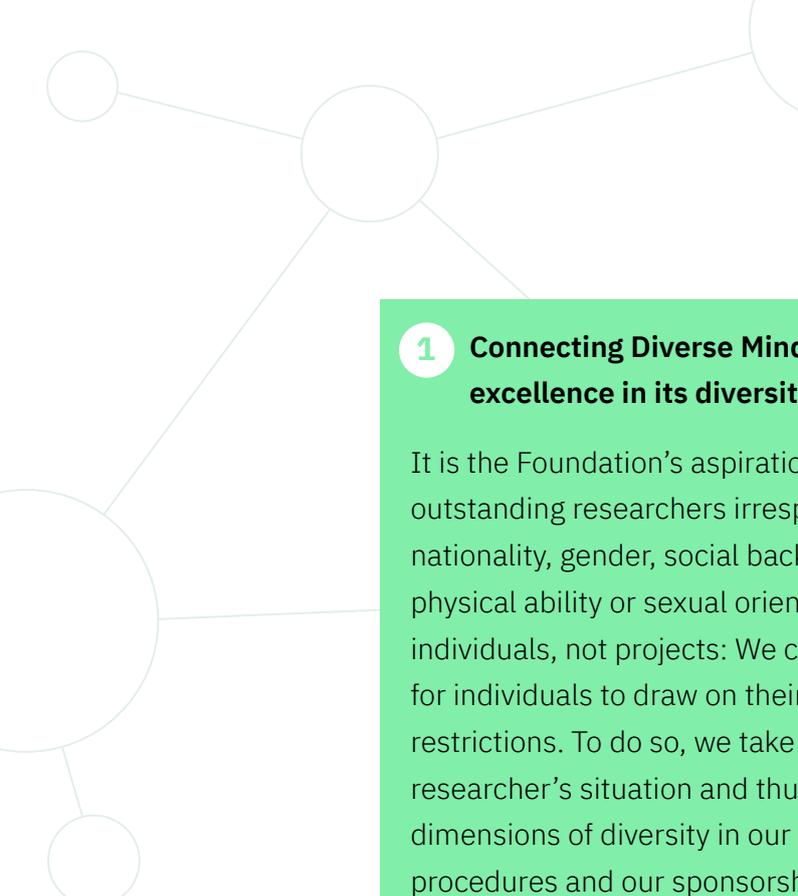
1 Humboldt Foundation statutes, §2 (3)



In this way, we also want to generate ideas in the German and international academic landscapes that go beyond the organisational role of the Foundation: in the contest for the best researchers, expressly promoting diversity in science sustainably contributes to the attractiveness and success of Germany as a location for research. At the same time, such engagement is an aspect of our mission as an intermediary organisation for German foreign cultural and educational policy (FCEP): all around the world, Humboldtians share values such as the freedom of science and equality of opportunity. To live and promote diversity in our *network of trust* is, therefore, essential for reinforcing the credibility of FCEP in global discourse.

The *Agenda for Lived Diversity* focuses on **three** concrete **fields of action**:

- 1. *Connecting Diverse Minds*:** We want to identify and recruit academic talents in all their diversity and promote those with the greatest potential. Based on the understanding that the conditions for developing academic potential are different, we will systematically examine and secure equality of opportunity and accessibility. We will rigorously align our communications, selection and funding procedures to this goal.
- 2. *Diversity of Ideas*:** By leveraging the scientific expertise in our worldwide network we want to specifically drive knowledge about diversity and equality of opportunity. To this end, we will pool and connect the expertise in our network, feeding ideas emerging from science into the German research location as well as the international arena in a systematic and targeted way.
- 3. *Embracing Diversity*:** At head office, we will embed diversity even more firmly and permanently in our organisational structure not only with regard to the culture of work and leadership or staff recruitment but also to accessible, inclusive infrastructure.



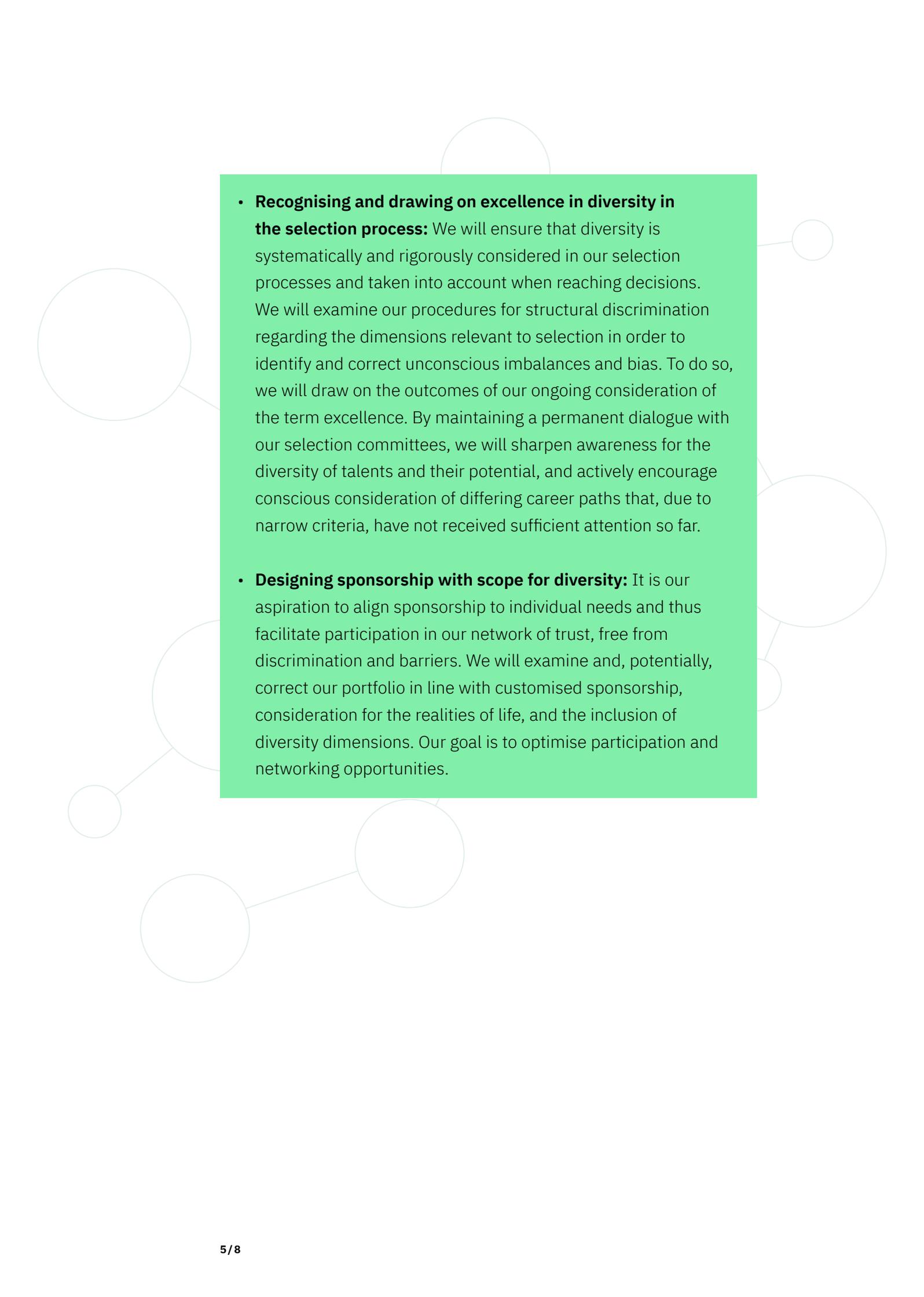
1 Connecting Diverse Minds – recognising and promoting excellence in its diversity

It is the Foundation's aspiration to identify, recruit and support outstanding researchers irrespective of age, ethnic origin and nationality, gender, social background, religion and worldview, physical ability or sexual orientation. On principle, we sponsor individuals, not projects: We create the scope, trust and freedom for individuals to draw on their own unique abilities without restrictions. To do so, we take account of each individual researcher's situation and thus already take account of certain dimensions of diversity in our programme portfolio, our selection procedures and our sponsorship activities. In all our fields of action, our aim is to focus even more attention on the diversity of life paths and educational routes that outstanding researchers all over the world have to cope with.

- **Reflecting on excellence and making criteria transparent:**

We want to proactively shape the development of the Humboldt Network in its diversity and ensure that we recognise scientific talents and their potential in all their diversity worldwide, addressing them appropriately in the different contexts in which excellence emerges. In line with our strategy AvH 2023, we shall, therefore, continually reflect on the term "excellence", which is so seminal to the Foundation's activities, and grapple with the relationship between academic excellence and diversity both strategically and specifically. We will make our outcomes transparent.

- **Doing justice to diversity in external communications:** The Foundation's image is a crucial step on a researcher's path to making contact and being motivated to apply to join the Humboldt Network. Building on our continuous reflection on academic excellence, we ensure that our communication activities and our marketing transport the Foundation's commitment to *all* talents. This includes addressing target groups expressly in the spirit of diversity.

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- **Recognising and drawing on excellence in diversity in the selection process:** We will ensure that diversity is systematically and rigorously considered in our selection processes and taken into account when reaching decisions. We will examine our procedures for structural discrimination regarding the dimensions relevant to selection in order to identify and correct unconscious imbalances and bias. To do so, we will draw on the outcomes of our ongoing consideration of the term excellence. By maintaining a permanent dialogue with our selection committees, we will sharpen awareness for the diversity of talents and their potential, and actively encourage conscious consideration of differing career paths that, due to narrow criteria, have not received sufficient attention so far.
 - **Designing sponsorship with scope for diversity:** It is our aspiration to align sponsorship to individual needs and thus facilitate participation in our network of trust, free from discrimination and barriers. We will examine and, potentially, correct our portfolio in line with customised sponsorship, consideration for the realities of life, and the inclusion of diversity dimensions. Our goal is to optimise participation and networking opportunities.

2 Diversity of Ideas – for an excellent science system

The Foundation sponsors a significant number of outstanding international researchers who address the most varied aspects of diversity and equality of opportunity in their research. At the same time, as one of the leading science organisations in Germany, the Foundation has an outstanding reputation for building structures in the German research location and internationally. Drawing on the expertise in our worldwide network, we would like to systematically utilise this potential to contribute both to more diversity in science and research as well as to scientific analysis of the topic.

- **Thinking diversity through:** The Humboldt Network includes researchers with a broad range of expertise in diversity and equality of opportunity. We expressly want to expand this expertise and pool it in the sense of a “diversity of minds”: by employing and developing our existing sponsorship tools we will bring together researchers with common interests and promote the creation of topic-related “networks within the network.”
- **Showcasing pertinent individuals and channelling scientific expertise into decision-making processes:** We will make greater use of the potential of Humboldtians who can play an exemplary or advisory role in politics and civil society on topics relating to diversity and equality of opportunity. In our communications and public relations activities, we will showcase researchers who have the relevant specialist expertise and connect them with our external stakeholders so that their knowledge can flow into decision-making processes.
- **Driving diversity in the German research location and internationally:** Together with partner organisations, the *Bundestag* and ministries we will harness our institutional expertise and experience to strategically advocate for optimum general conditions to expressly reinforce diversity in research promotion.

3 Embracing Diversity – practising a culture of diversity at the Foundation

For us at the Humboldt Foundation, lived diversity means practising diversity internally as well as externally. In our selection and sponsorship activities, it is our aspiration to embrace the diversity of perspectives, life paths and educational routes worldwide and to respond fairly. This can be achieved when the people active in the organisation represent a broad spectrum of roots, background, experience, orientation and perspective. Which is why, in our work at the Foundation's head office, we want to take even greater account of diversity in working and leadership culture, staff recruitment and accessibility.

- **Systematically positioning the Foundation's activities to promote diversity:** We want to ensure that diversity is structurally, comprehensively and actively promoted in the Foundation's activities. We are thus expressly driving this goal and providing the necessary resources to do so.
- **Recruiting a diversity of competencies, biographies and perspectives for the Foundation:** We also want to see a diversity of competencies, biographies and perspectives at our head office. After all, it is diverse teams that generate the best results – which is precisely our aspiration for our own work. To this end, we want to spark the interest of applicants with different backgrounds to consider the Foundation as an employer and recruit them.
- **Practising an inclusive working culture:** In our dealings with one another we will also emphasise more systematically our recognition and regard for different social and ethnic backgrounds, competencies and realities of life. It is our aim to make decisions based on differing perspectives and experience as well as to include, listen to and learn from a plurality of individuals. This should help to promote a sense of belonging.

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- **Creating comprehensive accessibility:** An aspect of the culture of diversity at the Humboldt Foundation is accessibility in all areas. On the one hand, this means an inclusive working environment and the immediate practical conditions for accessibility in everyday working life. On the other, it also refers to access to technology, software and documents.