



$|x| =$   
more than one

**On track for equal opportunities**

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## **1x1 = more than one**

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## Contents

1. **Men's jobs, women's jobs**  
**Employee structure.** Lisa Pauer sets off in search
2. **Why men lead the way. Why shouldn't women be crane drivers?**  
**Qualification, training, continuing education.** Lisa shakes the foundations of fixed ideas
3. **A promising method**  
**Gender Mainstreaming.** Lisa meets Anne Wise
4. **The price of jobs**  
**Transformation, social cuts, unemployment and positive action.** Anne faces a lot of questions
5. **Differences in assessment between women and men**  
**Selection processes for recruitment and in-house appointments.** Lisa and Anne identify the hidden dimensions of gender
6. **Discovery of the "male bonus"**  
**Pay.** Lisa and Anne work their way through wage and salary groups
7. **Dead-ends and springboards**  
**Employee histories / promotion and career opportunities.** Anne and Lisa hit the glass ceiling
8. **The use of equal opportunities**  
**Positive action for women / Equal opportunities.** Lisa finds some allies
9. **Many roads lead to more quality of life**  
**Working times.** Lisa's part-time balance sheet
10. **Do only women have families?**  
**Work/Life balance.** Lisa and Anne find so many ways to achieve it
11. **Not in our company!**  
**Sexual harassment and mobbing.** Anne launches a surprise campaign
12. **What companies tell us**  
**Corporate culture, diversity - the variety in a company.** Lisa and Anne discover the body language of their company
13. **Do the hard things while they are still easy**  
**Works Council activities.** Lisa's programme and Anne's plans - another meeting

Dear Colleagues,  
Dear Readers,

1x1 = more than one. This is the story of a friendship between two Works Council members – Lisa from the Western part of Germany and Anne from the Eastern part. It is not so long ago that East Germany (the German Democratic Republic or GDR) and West Germany were two different countries, with opposite political and ideological ties. Now they are all a part of one nation – combining the “old States” or “Western Laender” on the one hand and the “new States” or “Eastern Laender” which joined the Federal Republic of Germany in the process of unification. Though many of the problems are the same, there is still an enormous West-East divide. 1x1 tells us how Lisa and Anne meet up, and how they learn from each other as they begin to make changes in their working environments.

They firmly believe that women and men have one common future – with equal rights and equal opportunities.

They run into many cases of injustice along their way, with discrimination both open and hidden; they hit the “glass ceiling”. Truths which had always seemed to be eternal suddenly begin to look very shaky. They discover how the conditions of life can be changed “one by one”, both within the working environment and outside it, when diversity and differences between people are respected and recognised, and when everyone gets equal opportunities.

They discover that language aspects of gender equality should not be neglected – speakers of other languages will be interested to compare gender issues arising from their own language with those in the German language. For example, whereas English has just one word for an “employee” (male or female), German (like many other languages) requires a choice between the masculine form “Mitarbeiter” or the feminine form “Mitarbeiterin”. Or between “Elektroniker/Elektronikerin”, “Ingenieur/Ingenieurin”, etc. With significant impact on perceptions and opportunities.

Taking steps “one by one”, Lisa and Anne find solutions and develop strategies to move towards their objectives. They make use of all the opportunities provided by regulations both within their company and in law, which we in the trade unions have fought for, and which are only effective if they are understood and creatively implemented at the workplace.

The story of Lisa and Anne is the result of a joint project of the metalworkers’ union IG Metall (Department for Women and Equal Opportunities), and Transnet Railway Workers’ Union (Equal Opportunities Unit). It was created in a one-year development process, analysing extensive data from company, trade union and academic sources. In-depth interviews were conducted in companies in the metalworking and textile & garment industries and with Deutsche Bahn (German Rail), ensuring close contact

with the real situation in industry. The story of Lisa and Anne reflects the results of discussions with Works Council members of IG Metall and TRANSNET, providing support for development of the book on a continuous basis, and the findings from a workshop with full-time union officials and voluntary union participants.

Our purpose in this book is to encourage colleagues and works council members, representatives of youth and trainees, shop stewards and trade union officials, and also our counterparts in company management, to make equal opportunities an issue in their everyday work.

We wish to thank everyone who put so much commitment into the development of this book – the members of the support group, the participants at the workshop, and the many critical readers of the drafts. Special thanks go to our interviewees, who showed such receptiveness, openness and interest in addressing the questions and discussions of the project team. And not least, we would like to thank the project team from Salzburg, Austria, which did a fantastic job in taking all this material and turning it into a fascinating story for use in real situations in industry.

We trust that this book will give its readers as much benefit and enjoyment as it has to everyone involved in creating it.

Frankfurt am Main,  
August 2002

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## 1. Men's jobs, women's jobs

### Employee structure.

Lisa Pauer sets off in search

That morning, when Lisa Pauer got to her office, her way was suddenly blocked by an enormous bouquet of yellow sunflowers. Her Works Council Chairman was right behind it, almost equally radiant, visibly struggling to hold the enormous bundle. "Well, how about that!" he exclaimed cheerfully to welcome her. Lisa wasn't sure whether he was referring to her favourite flowers or to the overwhelming support they had just received in the Works Council elections. "I just wanted to say thank you for the fantastic support", her colleague continued. "You have done so much for this success, in your work over the years!" He thrust the flowers into her arms, gave her a big hug, and rushed out of the office as fast as he had rushed in.

Memories welled up in her mind as she arranged the flowers in a vase, reflecting on what things had been like when she joined the company. As a girl, Lisa had not had any opportunity for vocational training. And it was only when the new factory was opened that she got a secure job. That was with a company making electrical appliances; not long afterwards, it began to produce unexpectedly good business results, and was soon the biggest employer in the whole area. Lisa found a boss who showed great commitment and promoted her talents. She also found Stefan. The hard times they shared at the beginning of their relationship brought them closer together, but easy times later caused them to drift apart. Both were still fond of their daughter Lena.



That evening, she was sitting round a table with her Works Council colleagues. They drank to the success, enjoying the party atmosphere, but before long there was a lively discussion in progress. The new programme of work had to be drawn up. "Lisa will handle the women's issues", announced the Chairman briskly, not even waiting for her acceptance, but adding "with more of the same action she has produced in the past few years". Lisa understood the appreciation behind those words, but at the same time she felt annoyed at the way he said it. Never slow for a reply, she answered "If you want words, ask a man. If you want action, ask a woman. True, isn't it?"

After all, she was the one who had given "women's issues" the key position they now had, almost undisputedly, in the Works Council, thanks to the work she had done over the years. She had achieved a great deal for women in the company. She had helped to get part-time



jobs created, and some attractive working time systems introduced. She had succeeded in focusing the company's attention on training and continuing education. She could really be satisfied – it had not been easy to convince her colleagues of the necessity of all these measures, let alone company management. But despite all that, Lisa had felt more and more often in recent times that her Works Council activity was getting less recognition than that of her male colleagues. It was rare for one of her successes to make the headlines in the Works Council newsletter, or to be featured on posters or handbill campaigns. Just recently, she had noticed that she had only been permitted to present one of her achievements at an Employees' Meeting. "That will have to change," Lisa decided that evening. "I want my colleagues to pull together with me – and that means I'll have to get them on my side. I'll have to persuade them how useful it is if they contribute their viewpoints. I reckon that's going to keep me very busy this year!"



Lisa was not quite sure how to set about putting this plan into action. So the first thing she did was to search. In all those years, she had put together a whole lot of materials. Files with statistics, newspaper articles, brochures and books. "But what are you actually looking for?" asked her friend Nora, helpfully. "If only I knew that myself!" replied Lisa, rather unhelpfully.

It all started with a brochure for the company's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which attracted Lisa's interest to which jobs were held by men and which by women. As she browsed through it, she remembered that when the company was first set up, women were the majority in the workforce. Like herself, most of them were unskilled or semi-skilled, working in production on a piece work basis. "Today it's just the other way round," was the idea that flashed through her mind. "Of course today most manufacturing is completely automated. There are hardly any jobs left where people are readily accepted without any kind of training."

*Structure of  
employment in the  
company*



## Structure of employment in the company

She quickly found the relevant statistics in her files.

Number of employees, absolute		
	Blue collar	White collar
Total		
Women		
Men		

And she found detailed statistics showing which areas were mainly female, and which mainly male. To get a comparison, Lisa also checked out some of the data from previous years.

Number of employees by sector, absolute			
	Total	Women	Men
Commercial			
Industrial/technical			
Services			
Production			

For some time now, the Works Council had used a PC to keep these statistics. Lisa was one of those women who had initially viewed this innovation with some reservations, but at the same time with curiosity.

Now the only thing missing was an overview of the areas where the company provided training. She copied and adapted the table showing employee structure – that was easy enough. But the absolute figures did not give much information on the relationships between the individual groups of employees. Conversion of the figures to percentages was literally a matter of moments on her PC, providing a rapid and clear overview of the figures – women accounted for 33% of blue-collar workers. Only 4% of skilled workers, but as many as 51% of the unskilled and semi-skilled. And only 28% of white-collar workers. “The small percentage of white-collar workers is because they include not only commercial employees, but also technical employees,” thought Lisa. “And with technical employees becoming more and more important, the percentage of women among white-collar workers has actually been going down in recent years!”

Lisa sat at her PC, thinking long and deep. “Why did I never notice that before?” She wondered. “In technical and production areas, there are no more women than I can count on the fingers of one hand! Those are the areas in our company which have the greatest prestige. Whereas there are so many women in the service areas such as the kitchen, and to some extent also the commercial sector. And the situation is just the same with the trainees. I have to take a look at this in much more detail.” She sighed. And then she decided to shut down after a long day. “After all, Rome wasn’t built in a day,” she thought.

## **2. Why men lead the way. Why shouldn't women be crane drivers?**

### **Qualification, training, continuing education.**

Lisa shakes the foundations of fixed ideas

That Friday afternoon, Lisa felt on top of the world as she reached home. And there was her dog Minna, waiting inside the door, evidently full of anticipation. Minna was simply dancing around her, barking joyfully. Maybe she could sense how Lisa was looking forward to the weekend? Time and time again, Lisa is surprised by Minna, who seems to sense her mood at once.

"Yes, I have some news for both of you," she explained to Minna. "I simply can't wait for Nora to get home". Friday evening is when they always go running together. And that is when they exchange all their news, views and stories – all the things they don't have time to talk about in the routine of everyday work. Minna loves these excursions, too, so she insists in her own way on keeping to the schedule. Regular as clockwork, she fetches her lead and lays it at Lisa's feet, looking up at her eagerly. At such moments, Lisa is always glad she was able to keep Minna after the divorce.

"Isn't it strange", thought Lisa. "Stefan was able to make progress too, at the car works. Why couldn't he stand the fact that I was improving my position all the time, too?" In the end, there was no more than a façade left of what had been a happy family. And when Lena left home to go to university, Lisa decided to get divorced. Why bother to keep up pretences? She found it hard to understand that Stefan was so amazed. But she stuck to her decision. And a lucky chance came along just at the right time. Nora, who had been her best friend for some years, had just bought a large flat. So Lisa moved in with her.

Nora had not even closed the door behind her when Lisa burst out with the news. "Just imagine! My trade union is sending me to Brussels! To a conference on Gender Mainstreaming. The union secretary told me that will be one of the key subjects for the next few years. She thought of me because I was one of the first to have launched a training initiative in the company". Nora's puzzled look made her stop for a moment. "No, I don't think I've told you about that." And she thought to herself "I wonder why not? After all, I'm proud of it!"

It was a long evening. When they got back from their run, Lisa and Nora relaxed with a glass of wine on the patio, and Lisa began her account. “It must have been at least 15 years ago. I noticed that there was a change going on in production at our company. That there was a second production system being created more or less in parallel to the existing one – a more sophisticated line. And that it was operated exclusively by men. At first I didn’t think much about it. It all seemed so inevitable. It took some time for the feeling to grow in me that ‘Somebody has to do something!’ But nobody did anything. I struggled with myself for a very long time, wondering whether it was my business at all, and what on earth could be done in any case. After some months, I asked for a meeting with the Works Council, and told them ‘We should introduce a training programme for the women who are now working on the assembly line. Within a few years their work will have disappeared completely. If we give them training now, we can save the expense of looking for skilled workers. And what’s more, these women are familiar with how things work in our company, and they are loyal to it.’” That is how it had all started.

### On-the-job training

“Don’t think it was all plain sailing after that! I thought it was as clear as daylight, that everyone would see get the point at once and was bound to agree.” Her boss listened to her politely, but he started asking questions that she found very hard to answer, such as “Have you thought about how much that will cost?” and “Do you think that’s what the women really want?”

In the months that followed, Lisa got down to work systematically. She began looking for information, making a comprehensive collection of material, following up on the details, and talking to the women concerned. The response from the women was overwhelming, far more than she had ever expected. Almost effortlessly, she found she had a group working seriously on the subject, discussing the issue eagerly, and filling whole evenings with enthusiastic meetings. They made progress, step by step. And then came the decisive meeting with the plant manager.

*“The only advantage we have is the people who work here.”*

Lisa pulled out a newspaper cutting: “He used my favourite argument in an interview, and I’m still proud of that today. He said ‘We have no particular location advantage in the field of business we’re in, compared with a whole string of other locations worldwide. The only advantage we

have is the people who work here. (...) So as a manager I cannot afford to write off fifty per cent of the people who live in this region. Of course we want the best people here. And I don't mean the best of 50% of the people – I mean the best of 100% of them.”

“That was how we launched the training programme for the women working as semi-skilled workers. Everybody was a winner. The company, because it had a key competitive advantage. Nicely described by the plant manager! And the women, because their jobs were secured. And that was not all – the new qualification helped to upgrade them a little, too. And the men benefited, too, because the success of the programme caused company management to make it into an ongoing system for everyone.”

“Today it's all much easier, you know”, Lisa went on. “Everybody has taken on board the fact that continuing education is a must for technical and technological development – for companies and their staff, trade unions and governments. Nowadays I can cite plenty of legislation and collective bargaining agreements in my activities for the Works Council. But there's one thing that hasn't changed – I still have to watch very carefully that the women really get a fair deal in practice.”

“In the course of the years, I was able to prove that men had an advantage, on the basis of statistics:

- Men often get preference over women in further and continuing education. Even if they joined the company later.
- Women tend to enrol for courses which give them a certain specialisation in a certain field of activities, but do not give much opportunity of promotion. That kind of continuing education is mainly useful to the company, but rarely helps to give better grading and a better position for the women themselves.”

*Everybody  
benefits*

“For goodness sake!” exclaimed Nora, “the conclusions are obvious. Women need equal opportunities. They don't need special programmes, as if they were somehow less intelligent!” “Of course,” said Lisa in surprise, “but men take the lift to go up, while women have to use the stairs, is that it?” “Yes,” said Nora, taking up the comparison, “and at the same time women are accused of being too slow, and of needing stairs to be built specially for them, for example in the form of women's programmes!” Lisa paused a moment before she replied. “The answer is simple enough – why can't women and men use the same lift? That's how simple I want our future to be.”

*Nora's  
comparison*



The opportunities for participation in vocational qualification programmes continue to be unequally distributed. They depend on gender, age, nationality, position, level of schooling and of professional qualification, and on the size of the company.

The chances are worst for “unskilled” and “semi-skilled” workers, for those over 50 years old, for foreign nationals, and in particular for women. Management executives continue to get the best opportunities.

Women participate in vocational training programmes less often than men. Despite the fact that women’s general level of education is better.

The low level of participation of women in vocational training applies particularly in Germany’s “Western Laender” (with participation by 42% of employed men and 36% of employed women in 2000). The participation levels of women and men are almost equal in the “Eastern Laender”, with participation by 43% of employed men and 42% of employed women in 2000.

Women participate far less in training programmes that contribute to promotion than do men.

### **Reasons:**

- There are far fewer women in skilled, higher-ranking jobs (fewer women managers, more women among those employed without a specific qualification for the job or having their qualification in a different area, e.g. as “unskilled” or “semi-skilled” labour).
- Women account for the majority of part-time workers, who have so far had little opportunity to participate in vocational training programmes.
- Women continue to take on responsibility for household and children much more than men. That is still a major obstacle for participation in continuing education.
- And supervisors, who are mostly responsible for decisions on participation in further training, have much less perception of women and their potentials than they do of men.

“But back to you. Is that why you became a member of the Works Council?” “Well,” replied Lisa, “let’s say I kind of grew into it. At first all I wanted was this training initiative for women. But that opened my eyes more and more for other issues, too. And I also got so much support

from so many people. And in particular, I saw how the women who went on these courses and got these qualifications grew in stature, and how much pride it gave them. When the chairman of the Works Council approached me and asked me if I would like to stand for office, that was the only logical thing for me to do.”

### **Checklist for questions on continuing education**

- Where and when do continuing education programmes take place?
- Are family obligations of employees taken into account in the arrangements for seminars/courses (child care, seminar times, travel)?
- Are female employees specifically addressed and motivated to participate in continuing education?
- If there are no continuing education programmes available, either in-house or outside of the company: is there a demand for such courses?
- Are there continuing education courses available for part-time employees and for unskilled and semi-skilled labour, and for employees currently on parental leave?
- Are seminars and courses also accessible to those who have only limited knowledge of the German language?

### **What can I do as a Works Council member?**

- Draw up an overview of the continuing educational opportunities available in the company, with a brief description of contents and conditions of access.
- Inform women colleagues of opportunities for continuing education and release for educational purposes.
- Talk to women colleagues specifically. Encourage them to prepare time, continuing education and promotion plans. Women are often inhibited by lack of self-confidence.
- Start an initiative in the human resources department to have development plans drawn up together with women colleagues, and for them to be invited specifically to participate in further training programmes.
- Draw up a concept together with everyone concerned for maintaining contact with and re-integration of employees currently

on parental leave (including specific continuing education and training programmes).

- Raise the awareness of the human resources department for the provision of customized training courses for different groups of employees: women and men – particularly in the technical area, for employees without training or whose training is in a different area, and for employees with other mother tongues.
- Conclude a company agreement on training measures. Include in it minimum quotas or target levels for participation by women. Include part-time workers specifically.
- Encourage the holding of further educational courses for management staff and for those holding responsibility for personnel, in order to raise their awareness of gender aspects in further training and human resources development.

### Model statistics on further training opportunities

Seminar/Course	2000				2001			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%

### Training opportunities, breakdown by professional groups

Seminar/Course	2001							
	Women		Professional group		Men		Professional group	
	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%	Absolute	%

### Schooling and vocational training

Two weeks later, Nora was taking Lisa to the station. On the way to Brussels, Lisa wanted to visit her daughter, who is studying Information Technology in Munich. Lena's decision to study IT had been quite a surprise for her parents, and very pleasing for both of them. Stefan never forgot to mention his part in her education – "After all, I was the one that aroused her interest in manual and technical skills!"

Lisa had also noticed in her company that there was an enormous change in the education and training background of the girls, but hardly any change in their career choices. Girls account for more than 54% of those leaving school with a qualification to enter university, almost 52% of those with a secondary school qualification, and only 35% of those who leave school without any formal qualification at all.

And yet more than half of these young women opt for training in only ten out of a total of 400 jobs that provide formal training. With men, the range of career goals is much wider, with the top ten training profiles accounting for only about 39% of job starters.

#### Top ten training areas for female job starters (2000)

Training profile	Female trainees entering training (absolute)	% related to all females entering training
Office clerk	21,333	7.9
Retail trade	19,456	7.2
Hairdresser	17,639	6.6
Medical assistant	15,773	5.9
Dental assistant	13,845	5.2
Industrial clerk	13,231	4.9
Salesperson in food retailing	11,644	4.3
Bank clerk	10,588	3.9
Hotel clerk	10,078	3.7
Salesperson	10,014	3.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>143,601</b>	<b>53.3</b>

Looking at the new training profiles created in IT, the ratio is even more dramatic. Women account for less than 20% – despite the great demand for qualified people specifically in this sector.

Lisa is familiar with the arguments that keep coming up against the training of women in “non-traditional” careers. They are very deep-rooted ideas, and she has discussed all of them very often before:

- Girls do not enrol.
- You cannot expect women to do work that is physically hard or dirty.
- Women do not have the manual dexterity and interest needed in this kind of work.
- Women leave to start families – training them would be a wasted investment.

### **Girls do not enrol**

Lisa is aware that the ideas which girls have of many jobs are completely out of line with today’s reality. The world of work has changed so much in recent years, in some cases quite radically. It is an important job for companies themselves to correct these ideas.

*The arguments that keep coming up against employment of women in “non-traditional” jobs.*

“It’s quite obvious, you have to give children the idea that they can also take up technical jobs. You have to show them career opportunities, organise open days, and give the girls a chance to see that they don’t just have hard physical work to do. So that they can get an impression of it, and say ‘Yes, that’s a job I could do.’”

(Male employee, metalworking company)

### **The male protective instinct, or: women cannot be expected to do heavy, dirty work**

But what about hospitals and old people’s homes? Women do very heavy physical work there, every day of the year. And in warehouses, there are women doing the heavy work while the men in the same building are driving fork-lift trucks. Women have to cope with heavy, dirty work on assembly lines, at supermarket cash desks, and not least in housework. All these areas are typical women’s jobs, and no-one asks whether women can be expected to do the work. At the same time, production processes have changed enormously as technology has increasingly moved into production. There are now countless technical systems available to help. Why shouldn’t women operate mechanical excavators and cranes? And dirty work is no longer so

*Truths are hidden behind arguments.*



common: “Our Hamburg plant is so clean you could eat from the floor!”  
(Management assistant)

How did Stefan put it in the course of a discussion? “That is just a clever argument used by the guys! We don’t say ‘Look, girls, these are well paid jobs, so we don’t want you doing them’. We say ‘We’re protecting you from all these disagreeable and health-damaging things.’” Lisa had noticed with great interest how Stefan changed his point of view as he followed his daughter’s progress. He had found it hard to believe how difficult it was for Lena to get a holiday job, whereas male students studying the same subject had companies queuing up to give them jobs.

### **Women lack the necessary dexterity**

What a lot of rubbish Lisa had to listen to! For example, that women are good for assembly line work because of their dexterity and patience. Does that mean men lack dexterity and patience? Then what about jobs that require handling of precision tools, such as the watchmaker’s trade? Or goldsmiths?

“Basically, that’s just a claim for self-protection. If there are women working in the company, you can also have female apprentices and trainees there.”

(Works Council Chairman, metalworking company)

Lisa likes to quote Plato in this type of discussion: “There is no such thing, my friend, as an occupation specifically for women, simply because they are women, and nor is there an occupation specifically for men, simply because they are men. Talents are distributed equally between the two sexes.”

*Plato's wisdom.*

In the end, Lena did find something. In a metalworking company that trained young women in technical and industrial jobs, and got very good results with them. Particularly since they recruited women instructors, too. After all, girls have different questions, different problems and also different language compared with boys.

“Then we had a colleague from the first course who obtained a qualification as an instructor. She took a special interest in these girls. Women in management – that is important in training just as it is in the industrial sector. Because girls at the age of 15 or 16 find it hard to discuss everything with a male instructor. Such as problems in their love life, and all the things that come up.”

(Works Council Chairman, metalworking company)

“So what could I do in my area to improve the situation?” thought Lisa, and began to write down her ideas:

- We not only have to show the changes in the world of work, but also to give tangible experience of them.
- Companies, like instructors, are responsible for helping women to find their way into new career paths.
- We all have to revise our ideas. What is “un-feminine” about technical jobs? Women have no lack of dexterity, and they certainly have no lack of brains.
- In those areas where there were no women employed in the past, it is important to give the male colleagues a chance to get prepared for this change.
- It is essential here, as everywhere else, to make sure that there is no form of harassment of women.

### **Women will leave to have children – training would be a waste of money**

That is the “dinosaur” among all the reasons given, so Lisa believes. Because it is so old, and also because it is rapidly becoming as extinct as the dinosaurs. People are realising more and more that young women not only have a right to build up their own ability to earn a living, but also have the will to do so.

Lisa remembers exactly how surprised everyone was, including herself, when she first took the trouble to check whether men really stay with the company longer than women.

Age group	1994		1998		2002	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
15-25						
26-35						
36-45						
46-55						
56 or older						

Sample statistical chart showing departures of employees for reference years (the same statistics can also be drawn up for interruptions of

work). But the figures alone did not give a clear picture. Lisa had to clear up a couple of points first:

- Is there a connection between qualification and duration of employment with the company?
- Do women leave the company only for family reasons?
- Does the company only/mainly dismiss women?

These analyses made it quite clear that men do not feel tied to one company for ever. Not by a long way! They simply leave the company for different reasons. Either because they can earn more somewhere else, or because they have an opportunity for a better position, or because they find more attractive working conditions.

*Departures of employees.*

“We had a plant manager who was not afraid to speak his mind! He said ‘Men can be bad investments, too, because they switch to another company just for more money or for the sake of their career. That is just as much a mistaken investment!’ (...) That is word for word what my plant manager said!”

(Works Council Chairman, metalworking company)

Women tend to be more loyal to their company, and to be determined to return to their workplace if they have had to interrupt their careers to look after their family.

In all these discussions, there is always one point that Lisa saves for the end – “Men have children as well, these days. Fathers can and should make use of parental leave just as much as mothers. That limits their availability to the company, too.”

*Men have children, too*

### **What can I do as a Works Council member?**

- Check announcements of trainee positions: do they also address women?
- Talk to supervisors and managers specifically about giving opportunities to young women.
- Make sure that the training staff have the skills to handle young women as well as young men.
- Make sure that all the necessary amenities are available pursuant to the regulations for training facilities (amenities rooms, toilets, etc.).
- Organise guidance / partnership / mentors (male/female) for female trainees.
- Check the aptitude tests. Are there any hidden obstacles for young women?
- Check the attitude of company management, the human resources department, and instructors, to the employment of women.
- Prepare the ground in the human resources department and with the head of training for future training of girls.
- Organise discussions on this subject, and get all employees in the company involved.

On the plane to Brussels, Lisa got out her ultra-flat notebook. She is the kind of person who cannot be idle for long. Her daughter had told her with such enthusiasm about “Girls’ Day” that Lisa decided “Next year I want my company to do that, too.” And so set about noting down the ideas and impressions while they were still fresh in her mind.

### **Girls’ Day – an idea catches on**

Girls’ Day is a day when the doors of workshops, offices and editorial offices are opened to schoolgirls in grades 5 to 10 – an outstanding opportunity for girls to get an impression of so many aspects of the world of work. The goal of this nationwide campaign is to encourage girls to go in for jobs which are “non-typical of women”, and to help give them a grasp of working life today.

This enables girls to discover how interesting and exciting it can be to work in engineering, system electronics, mechatronics or IT. And it gives them contacts with employers who may be relevant for later job applications.

In Leipzig, for example, the young women were given a chance to see how a train timetable is prepared. And in Hamburg, a qualified electronics technician took her visitors on a tour of a suburban train maintenance depot. In Kassel, girls were given an opportunity to look behind the scenes of the “Culture Station”.

In 2002, as many as 40,000 girls took part in the campaign, with 1200 companies opening their doors.

“My parents work for Lucent, a telecommunications equipment company. On Girls’ Day, we were given an introduction to everything the company makes. For example, they showed us how fibre optic cables are made, and we talked to a manager about his work”.

(Stefanie (17), on her visit to Lucent, Nuremberg, on Girls’ Day.)

Aircraft construction – a subject for girls? “Of course” says Sarah (13) from Buxtehude. “I want to know how they keep the aircraft up in the air!” Sarah was one of the 500 young women who visited the Airbus facility in Finkenwerder. She was able to see how aircraft components are designed on a PC; and in the apprentice workshop she had a chance to see various different metalworking trades. She also saw the final assembly line, showing how a finished aircraft is put together.

[www.girls-day.de](http://www.girls-day.de)

Girls’ Day is normally held on the fourth Thursday in April each year (but on 8 May in 2003).

In the course of the years, Lisa has developed the habit of noting down benefits not only for employees, but also for the company:

- Helps us to identify a top source of good people for the future.
- Strengthens employees’ links with the company if they can bring their daughters along.
- Strengthens the feeling of togetherness, and identification of our employees with the company, by getting them involved in planning and organisation.
- Increases motivation of staff by getting them to act as mentors for the girls.
- And not least, all the media give extensive reports of the campaign. That enhances our positive public image.



### 3. A promising method

#### Gender Mainstreaming.

##### Lisa meets Anne Wise

What a babble of voices filling the conference rooms at the EU offices in Brussels! A good thing Lisa was able to get used to it the previous evening. There was a very mixed group of women at her table, and just a few men – mostly from the Northern countries, she thought. She had not yet met anyone from Germany, so on registration she asked to be introduced to a participant from Germany. And before long one of the conference organisers approached her, bringing another woman with her. Yes, that was someone she had noticed the day before. That shock of red hair? She took an immediate liking to her. “This is Anne Wise. She’s an engineer. A colleague from Berlin.” Then Lisa introduced herself, and in next to no time, the two women had complete confidence in one another. Lisa explained briefly where she was working, and told Anne a little about her life. “And what about you?” she asked finally. “I had my training with the Reichsbahn,” said Anne, referring to the rail organisation in Eastern Germany, “and...” “Oh, you must be from Eastern Germany?” asked Lisa in surprise. “That’s right. And I’m still with the same company,” replied Anne. “I’m Chairperson of the Works Council, so I’m on release from work for two years. I’m divorced. We have two fantastic kids, Wolf and Kathrin. Both of them at university now. My husband was okay, but somehow we drifted apart and didn’t notice until it was too late. Sometimes I still regret that. I was on my own for a long time. Until Frieder came along. Now he keeps me on my toes. He has a habit of asking me questions that I had never perceived as questions needing an answer. For example, ‘Why should you iron my shirts? Do I iron your blouses?’” And both of them laughed.



“What do you know about Gender Mainstreaming?” asked Lisa after a while. “I’ve read a little about it,” said Anne. “The first regional administration to adopt a resolution on the subject was with us in the East, that is in Saxony-Anhalt. A method to achieve equal opportunity more effectively. Not in opposition to improving women’s opportunities, if I have understood it rightly, but supplementary. Gender Mainstreaming builds on the experience gathered in positive action for women. What I particularly like about it is that it will help us to get out of the ‘women’s corner’. But that’s about all I know about it.”

*From positive action  
to equal  
opportunities*

The conference was opened. Lisa was beginning to like this woman. And Anne was also thinking “Even if there is still a wall running through people’s minds between East and West, maybe the two of us can knock down that wall in our minds”.

The conference Chairperson started by presenting the idea and principle of Gender Mainstreaming (GM):

“Gender Mainstreaming comprises re-organisation, improvement, development and assessment of decision-making processes in all policy and working areas of an organisation. The objective of Gender Mainstreaming is to include the perspective of gender relations in all decision-making processes, and to make use of all decision-making processes for gender equality.” (Definition by the EU Commission)

#### **What does gender mean?**

A distinction is made in English between “sex” (a biological characteristic) and “gender” (a social characteristic). The German word “*Geschlecht*” includes both of these components, making it more difficult to distinguish between them, which is why the English term is also used in German discussions of the issue. Gender refers to the social and cultural roles of both men and women, and of the relationship between them – men have a social gender, too – they are not the generally applicable norm for humankind! The biological differences can no longer be used to justify the differences made by society between them. Gender characteristics (social and cultural roles of men and women respectively) are regarded as something that has grown up in historical processes; they can be changed and re-organised by deliberate policy.

#### **GM is top down**

Gender Mainstreaming is a process that is desired and initiated at top management level, and is binding on everyone. The objective is to launch processes of change, for example in the organisation of work, in working time arrangements, and in collective bargaining policy. Those holding managerial positions in the company should include Gender Mainstreaming in their everyday activities, just as they consider budgetary possibilities and constraints on an everyday basis and in all decision making.

#### GM and men

One of the key points in Gender Mainstreaming is the understanding that women and men should work equally on changing the relationship between the genders. Admittedly, the initiative still lies with women in practice – that applies within companies and in the trade unions. But it is noticeable that men are increasingly taking on responsibility, too. The changes in society in recent decades have also created a much more progressive climate, favouring equal opportunities.

*Gender  
Mainstreaming  
and men*

IG Metall adopted its Guidelines on “Women and Equal Opportunities Policy” in 2002, whereby “both women and men are responsible for changes in gender relationships. (...) IG Metall undertakes to apply the principle of Gender Mainstreaming. This is intended to include gender aspects as an effective influence and force for change in the planning and decision making processes of IG Metall.”

TRANSNET has already incorporated Gender Mainstreaming in its Statutes. At the present time, IG Metall and TRANSNET are working on comprehensive concepts for its introduction. At the same time, TRANSNET and IG Metall have fixed the minimum representation of women, in accordance with their percentage membership, in all union bodies and committees.

#### How to get GM into people's minds

To get GM established in management, it will be essential to launch concrete proposals and projects, and at the same time to prove that Gender Mainstreaming is worthwhile: “Balance sheets count, and companies see it in economic terms” (Management assistant)

Anne and Lisa were both interested in the same workshop.

#### How to introduce GM in a company

The moderator was from Sweden. She had led the way in introduction of a system known as the **4R Method**.

“Your first step towards GM is preparation. You start by deciding which area of the company you want to analyse. This may be looking inwards

or outwards. Looking inwards means you are analysing the structures, working time organisation, or grading system within your own organisation. Looking outwards means you are considering a target group of your company, where you wish to generate enthusiasm for a certain activity, for example for Gender Mainstreaming.

**The first R – Representation.** The basic question is “Who is where?” How many jobs in what areas are held by women, and how many by men? How many applications are received from women/men? How many women/men are upgraded per year? How many women/men come back to the company following parental leave? These are questions that help to understand gender relationships. Then you start a discussion on the results – are you satisfied with the distribution of women and men? If so, why? If not, what should it be?

**Example of internal effect:**

**Trade union meeting**

How many women and how many men are there in the regional and local executive committees? How many of them have children or relatives in need of care, where they have caring responsibilities after work? So what factors need to be taken into account when setting place and time of meetings for these colleagues?

**Example of external effect:**

**Gaining the support of Works Council members for GM**

At the present time, there is very little practical application of Gender Mainstreaming in the companies. So you invite the Works Council members of your region to a GM Introduction Workshop, with the primary goal of gaining the support of Works Council Chairpersons. However, only one Works Council Chairman enrolls for the workshop. Later on you find out that non-attendance by male colleagues was because they thought the subject was positive action for women, and thought it did not concern them. So what steps are needed to get more male Works Council members, particularly Chairmen, interested in this process? What subjects can be used to address this group specifically?

**The second R – Resources.** Check the resources available to women and men – resources such as money, time and physical space, know-how, education, and access to networks. Are you satisfied with the distribution of resources between women and men? If so, how can this distribution be secured for the immediate future? If not, what should the distribution be?

#### **Example: meeting culture**

There are five female colleagues and one male colleague who have to look after their children. This means they are often unable to attend trade union meetings after working hours or at weekends. Meetings during working time mean loss of pay, and there are no funds available in the current budget year to provide compensation. So it is agreed that meetings will be held on Saturdays in the current year, but child care will be provided. From the next budgetary year onwards, the meetings will be held in working time. Compensation for loss of pay will be included in financial planning.

**The third R – Realities.** Choose a gender relationship issue to analyse. For example the reasons why more men are assigned to higher grades, why there are so few women in management positions and among trainees, if this is something you found in analysis of Representation or Resources.

#### **Example: collective wage bargaining**

If there are very few women involved in collective wage bargaining, this directly impacts how much focus there is on gender-specific issues, for example in work assessment.

Often male colleagues do not attach so much importance to these issues, because they do not feel directly concerned. They stress the fact that it makes no difference to results whether the people in the negotiating team are women or men – what counts is the result, they say. And apart from that, they say, the employee side is mainly represented by male delegates, so it is harder for women to assert their positions in negotiations.

What is the traditional negotiating culture? What is the degree of informality? What abilities are needed for negotiation? What can be done to give women the necessary skills? What can be done to ensure that negotiating culture incorporates gender-specific aspects? For example, TRANSNET and IG Metall have stipulated that, as a minimum, women should be represented in the negotiating committee in proportion to their share of membership in the respective area.

**The fourth R – Rights.** This point focuses on applicable regulations. For example, it may be found that women and men are subject to the same regulations, but that women and men do not use them or cannot use them to the same extent. Then you may have to talk about the third





R again, i.e. Reality. For example, why are there differences in use of parental leave? In many cases, the reason is loss of income.

Discuss the significance of the results, and develop an assessment of the situation. And, particularly important, define actions and goals that you wish to achieve within a specified period, and monitor these on a continuous basis.”

Finally, the speaker handed out a summary. Lisa got immersed in it at once.

#### **What can I do as a Works Council member?**

- Take part in awareness raising courses to acquire gender competence.
- Try to persuade representatives of management to enrol for a gender training course. And make sure that this kind of training is not simply misunderstood as a kind of “inoculation”, but that it is followed up by concrete action.
- Conduct training events to familiarise Works Council members with the principle of Gender Mainstreaming.
- Start a working group with interested colleagues from the Works Council and company management, with the goal of preparing a Gender Mainstreaming project.
- Address explicitly not only men and women, but also fathers and mothers.
- Make sure that, in the course of this process, you also address male colleagues, in particular the decision makers in each area, the Works Council chairpersons and the management representatives.
- Conduct an inventory on the basis of the 4R method, in areas that you feel are relevant.
- Make sure that Gender Mainstreaming does not lead to replacement of other measures for positive action of women.
- Look for good examples of Gender Mainstreaming projects at company and inter-company level.
- Develop instruments for implementation of Gender Mainstreaming at the plants, with the aid of Works Council and human resources committee, e.g. for matters concerning personnel.

In the break, Lisa and Anne were sitting together. “There are some things that are now becoming clear to me”, said Lisa. “Although... it’s all rather complicated. Or maybe not? I was just thinking recently about whether there is a difference in how long male employees stay with the company, and how long female employees stay. That was Gender Mainstreaming! And then the picture no longer looked quite so uniform, suddenly the situation was very different. I was able to show the resources that we can gain in the company by this kind of breakdown of the situation for men and women.” Anne nodded in agreement, and Lisa continued before she had time to say anything. “And that business with the company buses *which transported the employees to the workplace* a few years back! The Plant Manager told us that he was going to discontinue operation of the company buses because demand for them had dropped so much. We agreed to that. At first sight, it seemed logical. More and more employees had their own car, and they no longer wanted to be tied to the fixed times and longer travelling times of the company buses. But then, a few months later, I noticed that some women had left the company because it was so difficult for them to get to work. If only we had done an analysis at the time on how many women and how many men were using the works bus...! Then we would have noticed that it was mainly the number of men using the bus that had gone down, but not the number of women. It’s still a fact that the family car is mostly used by the man. If we had done that, we would have looked for a different solution.” “That is a nice example, and a clear case of the value of Gender Mainstreaming” said Anne approvingly.

*The business with  
the works buses*

#### 4. The price of jobs

##### **Transformation, social cuts, unemployment and positive action.**

Anne faces a lot of questions

It was a long, intensive working day. After their evening meal, Lisa and Anne wanted to get back to their hotel as fast as possible. But the Swedish woman sitting at their table soon had them involved in a discussion.

And another participant asked “How are things going in your country since the fall of the Berlin Wall? What progress has been made with German unification?”

Anne answered almost without hesitating, “How can I explain it to you? We were separated by a wall. And then, after the fall of the wall, we had to put two completely different social and political systems together. But that still left an enormous divide. I would say the most obvious effect is precisely this separation in East and West – a separation that already looks like it could become permanent! The desperate situation in the labour market is even deepening the divide between East and West, and also increasing the social differences with us in the East. In the Eastern part of Germany, we really do have a ‘Two-Thirds Society’, in other words only one third of our population has made it into a position that would be regarded as average in the West.”

“Does that mean you have different problems from those in the West?” asked the Swede, and her interest sounded genuine. Anne did not have to think long for an answer. “The first thing we are doing in the East is fighting for every job. We’re still doing that. And we’re also struggling with problems that might seem rather trivial to you. Those who do have a job mostly have a high price to pay for it. Just recently, a friend of mine described her daily routine like this: ‘I get up at 4 o’clock, and have to leave home by 4.40 at the latest, to get the train to Erfurt. It’s a very quick change there, so the daily stress starts there and then – I have to catch that train, otherwise it’s a 1½ hour wait. Mostly I’m in the office by 6.45. And I’m home again by 17.15 if the train is on time. But in the afternoon things are not always running on time, which means that sometimes I miss the connecting train.’”



*The Wall has gone.  
But what about the  
wall in people's  
minds?*

“So mobility is the price that has to be paid to keep a job?” asked a woman who had been listening carefully.

“Yes, because mobility goes deeper. It involves long travel times, of course. Where jobs are being cut, mobility is a must. And that in turn means that there is only a minimum of time left for sorting out personal matters, for shopping, for looking after the children. When does this friend of mine have any time for a hobby? Or for sports? Or to keep up friendships? Or to attend training courses? You’re probably familiar with some cases of that kind of mobility. But not the kind of extremes that we have, I’m sure. The kind of mobility that is required here goes hand in hand with the ‘service society’. And the fact that adaptation of working times is more and more at the expense of employees. More and more, those who have jobs are forced to adjust their private lives to fit in with the world of work, instead of the other way round! That’s really hard to manage, and it’s much harder for women than for men.”

*Mobility in the East –  
Mobility in the West*

“Why is it harder for women?” came the interruption from one listener.

“Because the time you need for mobility has to be taken from somewhere else,” replied Anne. “From your own personal time. And women still have a double burden to bear, or even a triple burden, so they have less leisure time in any case. And there’s another point as well – women are more dependent than men on public transport. After all, who uses the family car? And public transport takes longer.”

“That’s related to something I recently read in a trade union magazine, where it said that unification of the two German States is mainly being achieved at the expense of women.”

“No, that’s not the way we see it, at least not yet. Though personally I have changed my views, and I do think there are some things that point in that direction,” said Anne, thoughtfully. “But there’s no doubt about it – the pressure that the companies have to face is largely being passed on to their employees. That means more intensity of work, requiring more mobility and more flexibility. And more willingness to do overtime. The working atmosphere is getting worse. With more mental stress on employees. And all of that comes on top of people’s worries about keeping their jobs. Women are always affected by all of that much more than men. I have put together some facts which I believe tell a very clear story.

*Pressure is  
differently distributed*

- Women in Germany's Eastern Laender are the losers in structural adaptation. The percentage of women in manufacturing industry and the service industries is going down.
- But the percentage of women in gainful employment is still higher in the Eastern Laender than in the Western Laender.
- Unemployment is more than twice as high in the Eastern Laender as it is in the Western Laender, and among women it is two and a half times as high.
- There is much less demand for part-time working in the East than in the West. And yet the percentage of women doing part-time work is rising.
- Newly created jobs are mainly taken by men, while women continue to be pushed out.
- Women are under-represented in programmes for creation of regular employment (recruitment subsidies, integration subsidies and contracts).
- In the Eastern Laender, there is a disproportionately large number of women participating in various kinds of job creation schemes that have so far produced little integration in the primary labour market.

### **Restructuring**

Anne looked around the group, searching for explanations. It was hard to get people to understand the consequences of such an enormous change as Germany had experienced. "The change of system after 1989 brought about complete restructuring in the Eastern Laender. Whole industrial centres were abandoned, or moved to new locations, or centralised, or else simply 'wound up' – the expression mostly used when plants are closed, to make it sound less dramatic. Like the word 'rationalisation', which is mostly used as a smoke screen to conceal what is really happening – all in all, a dramatic job-cutting operation, i.e. putting so many people out of work."

Lost in her thoughts, she found she had made some sketches on a notepad – a map of the German Democratic Republic; a factory building which she then crossed out; groups of pin men, where she crossed out two out of three in each group; and so on. She quoted what a colleague had once said to her: "Unification is really hard. We have just been bought up by the West. And that meant everything we had in the way of knowledge and information was wrong from the very beginning; the others had done everything right, and of course that was rather depressing for us."

“I suppose all these measures were examined to make sure they were socially acceptable, and that this is still being checked?” asked a colleague from Finland.

“Yes, that is our daily bread. Right from the beginning, we tried to use a general company agreement to make sure there were suitable social measures to cushion job losses. That meant that most of the job losses were settled by way of early retirement or by increased severance pay. In 1997, our company had 14,140 job cuts in that way, that is 5.7% of the workforce,” explained Anne, “which meant that we were better off than those employed in other companies.” “What would be the results of a Gender Mainstreaming analysis?” asked one of the participants. Anne looked at her and answered “A human resources spokesperson said recently ‘Job cuts have nothing to do with gender. At most one could say there are more women who are willing to leave.’”

In the general confusion of voices that followed, Anne could hear Lisa’s puzzled voice: “Did I understand you right? You mean the process itself is objective, and it affects everyone without distinction by gender, but more women volunteer to leave? I don’t get it. Why do women go of their own free will? After all in your part of the country they are normally very well trained. I had always thought that good training tends to stop people from retreating to Home Sweet Home.”

Anne was struggling audibly to find a reply: “If only I could answer that question! I keep asking myself whether it is the demands of companies for mobility and flexibility that induces women to give up their jobs. I would be amazed if that were the case, because my past experience tells me that in general women tend to react much more flexibly to new demands. As all the mothers among you know, you just can’t be a mother and be inflexible, that doesn’t work! A mother simply has to be flexible, and...” (Anne was evidently searching for the right words) “... a mother with flexibility is like a locomotive with wheels – it’s so self-evident that you don’t even have to mention it.” And then she continued “But maybe it is due to traditional role models? Maybe women are moving out of employment in favour of men – because men earn more? I know some women who have been put under a lot of pressure with precisely that idea. But I haven’t found any clear answer to the question yet. But I can’t help thinking of a former colleague that I have known for a very long time. She took the severance pay that was offered, because she said ‘I can’t do this to my children – I can’t expect



*More women leave  
of their own free will.  
But why?*

them to accept a situation where I'm away from home all the time, with all that travelling.' She was convinced she would find another job. I still ask how she is getting on, and she still has no job."

There was a moment of depressed silence. And then an Austrian woman asked "What strategies have you developed to safeguard jobs?" Anne turned to her and drew breath. "Together with our trade unions, we have come up with a number of possibilities. The first one is retraining. And then we do our best to secure employment by creating home-working opportunities. The unions have succeeded in establishing employment companies and training companies. It certainly doesn't solve all the problems, but it helps. The objective is always to safeguard jobs, but there simply aren't enough jobs available." She paused. "And then the only alternative is to move to the Western Laender. But of course that is no solution in the long run."

It was already very late, but no-one had left the group yet. "I think the problems we are discussing are just a matter of luxury compared with yours," said one participant, expressing the views of many. The others nodded in silent agreement. "It's getting rather late," said a Finn, looking at her watch, "but I would be interested to know if you see opportunities in the new legislation, or in the new government declaration, I'm not sure exactly what it is."

*Variety of strategies*

"You mean the Job-AQTIV Act? (*The reform of the Labour Promotion Act?*) I think that makes some important changes, specifically in terms of equal opportunities.

It puts Gender Mainstreaming right at the beginning in Section 1, as a goal and general principle for all the activities of the labour offices. It also includes the possibility of positive action measures for women."

At last the time had come to make a move, and Lisa and Anne set off back to their hotel together.

There were more working groups scheduled for the Sunday morning. Anne suggested at breakfast "Let's keep in touch, what do you think?"

*The Job-AQTIV Act*

"You mean we should get our network organised?" said Lisa in agreement. "You old fox, I'd almost forgotten... what you grinning at? That's just a phrase I use." Anne burst out laughing. "I thought you were referring to me when you said 'old'. Wouldn't have been so far from the mark. And my nickname since my schooldays has been 'foxy'."

"Because of your red hair?" "Yes, and because I always had the reputation of being rather cunning." "Maybe we could learn some self-assurance from East German women" smiled Lisa, half serious and half tongue-in-cheek. "But what was it I was trying to tell you? Oh yes, you

said yesterday that you know a website with lots of information on the Job-AQTIV Act. Can you send me the link?” “Sure. I’ll mail it to you, okay?”

When Anne got to the station, Frieder was waiting there to pick her up, and he asked for a complete report. “I’ll cook,” he said, “and you can tell me all about it while we’re eating.”

While Frieder was busy in the kitchen, Anne put together the information she had promised Anne:

“Link to Job-AQTIV Act (Third Social Code SGB III, also known as ‘Reform of Labour Promotion Act’), [www.arbeitsamt.de](http://www.arbeitsamt.de), reference ‘Chancengleichheit/Frauen’ [Equal opportunities/Women]. Or you can simply ask in the union office, or ask the Equal Opportunities Officer at your labour office. I would say these are the main points:





- Establishment of the Gender Mainstreaming approach as a fundamental principle and objective of labour market initiatives, coupled with the capability of specific positive action for women.
- The Act now makes it possible to provide assistance to improve the job opportunities for people who are in employment. That gives us many opportunities in the Works Council, in particular with training programmes for those who have no occupational training at all, whereas previously such courses were only available for unemployed people. Now the grant paid by the labour office can be up to the amount of the normal pay – an important incentive for employers to conduct training measures. That would be interesting to your company, wouldn't it? You told me in Brussels about the assembly line women at your company who do not have any vocational qualification, and who need something to be done urgently?!
- Measures to facilitate combination of family life and work, explicitly both for women and for men.
- Improved funding measures for part-time training programmes.
- Increase in payment levels for reimbursement of child care cost by the labour office to 130 euros per month, where the need arises due to further training and continuing education programmes.
- Job rotation as a means of job creation (wage cost subsidy where unemployed persons are recruited to deputise for regular workers who are undergoing further training).
- Possibility of participation in job creation schemes for vocational re-entrants who have no entitlement to unemployment benefit.
- Mandatory placement in industry as part of job creation schemes. That is important for women in East Germany, where there is a larger proportion of such schemes."



## 5. Differences in assessment between women and men

**Selection processes for recruitment and in-house appointments.** Lisa and Anne identify the hidden dimensions of gender

“it’s always great to be home again”, wrote Lisa on her return to Berlin, as she thanked Anne for the prompt information. “minna and nora collected me at the station, and minna was so enthusiastic she almost knocked me over. and then i had so much to tell them. what you said really made me think. i believe i understood some of it, at least i hope so. at our company, too, we have some colleagues from the eastern laender, and sometimes it’s like a meeting of two different worlds. looks like we have a lot of work ahead of us...

for goodness sake, i wanted to bring solutions home with me from brussels! but instead of that i’ve just brought a few more issues to work on ;-))

the attachment is some info on recruitment practice that i thought might interest you. you mentioned at some point that a lot more men are recruited than women, didn’t you? that really woke me up.

and then there’s something completely different i wanted to mention – a slightly off-beat idea on the personal side. do you remember we talked about your nickname ‘foxy’? one idea that came into my mind was that, really, it should be ‘vixeny’ for a female fox. i had two completely different ideas going through my mind – the cunning fox, a lone male roaming somehow aimlessly through the woods, hunting and sleeping; and then the cunning vixen, much more versatile, more far-sighted, and at the same time more caring – she teaches her fox cubs how to survive. all my best wishes, lisa.”

Anne opened the attached document. And found the words

“Recruitment practice is a loophole for indirect discrimination” highlighted by Lisa, and “Likeability as a recruitment criterion” and “Old role models die hard”.

She was still engrossed in reading them when Frieder came in. She was always thinking, and that was something he liked about her. Before long they were in the middle of a discussion.

### The hidden dimension of gender

“The human resources department is a key factor in equal opportunities. That is something I will bear in mind more in my work in future,” said Anne, drawing the conclusions from what she had read. “Job ads have been gender-neutral for a long time now,” noted Frieder, “and everybody refers to this equality in print – in adverts we always indicate that male or female applicants are welcome, for example referring to ‘ein/e Elektroniker/in’.”

“Fair enough,” said Anne, “but equal opportunities for women and men are not achieved until assessment is made without prejudice, by objective and transparent criteria. Our company makes use of all the modern tools of human resources planning. And human resources development. That’s what I mean when I say it’s a key factor.”

“What do you mean, transparency?” queried Frieder. “You’ll soon find you’re on slippery ground there when it comes to recruitment. I suppose every company says it makes its selection on the basis of aptitude for the job, but does that really happen? When the labour market is as tight as it is now, I think companies simply prefer to take on men. That is certainly what the labour market statistics in Eastern Germany suggest. I reckon that is very deeply entrenched thinking, that men are the breadwinners.” “Yes,” said Anne, “people still have their old habits of thinking – even here in the Eastern Laender, although we have experience of a different system! I told you about the discussion we had a few weeks ago, didn’t I? And how shocked I was to hear that from ‘our’ men. They said things like ‘Head office jobs are mainly reserved to men. Probably because women believe they are not up to it, because it’s mainly a question of understanding technical matters, and of course women are not so receptive to technical things.’”

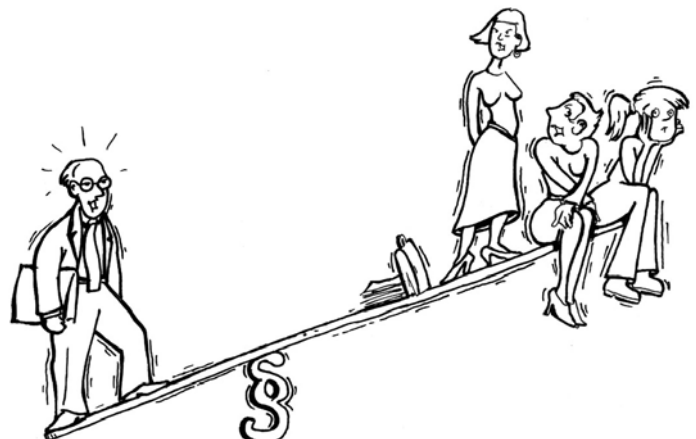
*Old ideas are not dead yet*

And a male colleague described the consequences in practice in very clear terms:

‘The proportion of women will go down, not because women leave the company or lose their jobs, but because we are explicitly taking on more controlling personnel – service managers and so on – and most of those are men. And that naturally means a change in the ratio of 37% women to 63% men. But overall, if we take out that part of company operations, there would be no change in the percentage relationship between women and men.’”

“Is that what is meant by ‘indirect discrimination’?” asked Frieder. “I had no idea what that meant in the past. The fact that certain doors remained closed to women for completely inexplicable reasons?” “Well”, said Anne, “direct discrimination is relatively easy to understand. There are two people working side by side on the assembly line, and one of those people gets less wages, because that person is a woman. So the demand was ‘Same pay for same work.’ But hardly had that simple method of discrimination been tracked down than it was replaced by new, more sophisticated methods. Disadvantages which are harder to prove. So a new demand was made, ‘Equal pay for equal work’. Why does a fork-lift truck driver get more money than a woman working on the assembly line, where the speed of work is determined by the speed of the conveyor belts?” Frieder looked at her seriously, and said “So the end of the line is what is in people’s minds – how do we change their ideas?” Anne nodded. “That’s just it. And that brings me back to the human resources department. That is where we have to demonstrate the positive force of new thinking for the company as a whole. That example of the controlling stations made it clear to me. That can be seen quite differently today, so a colleague from the Works Council told me. We had mechanical controlling stations out there in the past,” she said. “The operators had to set the points and signals by means of levers, which was very hard physical work, so we women were not permitted to do it. Since the arrival of electronic controlling stations, there is no reason why women should not operate them, too. So I think the proportion of women there will rise at some stage, because women are suddenly getting interested in this kind of technology now, because they can do this kind of job. One day there will be 10 or 15% of women in those jobs.”

“But we know,” Anne added, “that it doesn’t happen as automatically as that colleague said. Women have to be encouraged to get off the sidelines and into those jobs. Even our women, who are quite self-assured. Someone has to activate them. The company, and the Works Council, all of us have to approach those women and motivate them. That means more work in human resources development, I suppose. And who wants that? So we need methods and strategies, and we don’t have them yet. As far as I’m aware, nobody is now actively approaching the women and saying ‘Look, girls, don’t you want to be



engine drivers?’ We do have one woman engine driver – just one. We did have two, but one of them was retrained as a train conductor in the framework of a social selection programme; but she originally qualified as an engine driver.”

### When men and women do the same thing, it's not the same thing

“I suppose no-one would dispute the fact that when women come into a firm that was previously all men, that significantly improves the working atmosphere. But there is not much experience with men in women’s occupations, is there? My theory is that a woman’s occupation would be upgraded by the participation of men.” “Yes,” retorted Frieder, who was getting very worked up by now, “just as men’s occupations are suddenly downgraded when you get a lot of women coming into them. I always thought that was a scandal.” “How typical!” said Anne. “And it’s good evidence of the fact that everything men do is valued higher right from the start. That’s why the explanations of why men earn more and women should keep out of certain occupations often sound rather strange – they are so artificial! They can’t say, in the words of Bertolt Brecht, ‘He’s a man, and that’s enough’, so they say ‘that is hard physical work’ or ‘you need to have passed special examinations for that’, or ‘that is dirty work.’” Anne paused briefly, and added “But what I wanted to say was something different. About the engine driver. A colleague from the West said to me just recently ‘Women tend to go for communicative jobs. You rarely find women who want to sit in the driving seat of a locomotive and not have anyone to talk to. It’s different with men. They just sit down and drive. And the wages are nothing fantastic, either. And on top of that, engine drivers also have to do shunting, and disconnecting an engine from a train is not so easy.’

And do you know what I thought? Yes, I thought, what about the working times, the shift work, the tough, tiring physical work, and loneliness during work – all that is just as hard for men, isn’t it? Can’t we improve the work situation in human terms? Surely that’s what we should be trying to do.” And then Anne added with a mischievous smile, “but the idea that women should not be expected to do badly paid work, that’s okay by me!”



*He's a man,  
and that's enough?*

### Designed for women

But what about the jobs that are tailor-made for women? Surely there can be no question of discrimination there?

“There was an old foreman in our company, and he was in charge of the section for assembling the starter motors for cars. He didn’t even look at what qualifications the women had – he just looked at their fingers. Fat fingers: No. Fine fingers: Yes, because they had to manipulate the fine wires for the electric coils. They only took women for that job because they had more dexterity in handling those little components. They were more skilful at soldering, and they had a better eye for the job. And that was what mattered.”

(Works Council Chairman, metalworking company)

“Don’t you even go near a soldering iron again!” said Anne, wagging her finger threateningly. “You reckon men are good at the rough and dirty jobs, do you? Such as washing up, or washing nappies? Cleaning the car, definitely. Dusting and vacuum cleaning...” “For goodness sake!” said Frieder, whose usual patience was beginning to run out on hearing such nonsense...

### **Job applications and written selection processes**

Working with statistics may sound dull, but it they are the only way to get information on which people are taken for which job areas. In big companies, there is so much data that it is best to concentrate on a representative sample of application papers.

The figures will quickly show whether management is equally open to applications from women and men. Or whether there is gender bias for certain types of job.

After that, it is advisable to examine the facts behind some of the figures. How did the figures come about? How were the job interviews conducted? What questions were asked? To find out about that, it is advisable to analyse the questionnaires used, if possible together with the human resources department.

Are the questions for female applicants different from those for male applicants? Often women get asked detailed questions about their family life. Questions about whether they have children, whether they want to have children, and what caring obligations they have at home, are “perfectly normal” for women, as Anne knows from a colleague. “Yes, they even asked me whether I could imagine working at times like Easter, or on my son’s birthday.”

“With men, the questions barely touch on family life,” said Anne. “Aren’t you exaggerating?” asked Frieder, rather impatiently. “That’s important information for a company, whether a woman has children to look after, or maybe parents to care for”. “Firstly, why does it always have to be the woman who looks after the children? Surely children have a father, too? Secondly, everyone expects from women or even demands from them that they should have everything under control – job, family, etc. But at the same time, this efficiency is an obstacle – the boss is afraid that commitment at work could suffer, and her husband is afraid he and the children could be the losers. Can we ever do it right? After all, ...” “And thirdly,” interrupted Frieder, “why is it almost always the women who have to look after their relatives – you’ve forgotten that point. People always think of daughters rather than sons, or even worse, they think of daughters-in-law rather than sons. But no-one would even think of expecting a son-in-law to take on that responsibility, that just occurs to me.”

“Isn’t that awful! I’ve never looked at it that way,” said Anne, pausing for breath. “But let me continue with my idea. Imagine a man, married, with two small children. He has a sense of responsibility, he is reliable, and he is loyal to his company, he lives a well-ordered life. Everything speaks in his favour. Now imagine a woman with two small children – that woman has to run the household, do the shopping, pick up the children from kindergarten, or take them to school, do their homework with them, and look after them when they are ill. What does the boss think about her? ‘She is in constant stress, can’t do any overtime, often has to stay at home, and she is not mobile or flexible, either. Certainly can’t be considered for management work.’ So for women, a family is a minus point... in fact a whole string of minus points!”

*Family –  
an obstacle for her,  
a bonus for him?*

“There are some companies where people are beginning to revise their ideas. Since the introduction of the legal right to part-time working, some job adverts even point out specifically that a desire to work part-time is no obstacle to recruitment,” remarked Frieder. “But I’m not so sure if the majority of men are even aware that they are also entitled to switch to part-time working. I think it would be helpful if company management and the Works Council would give us men some information and support on this.”

### The decision

But how is the decision ultimately made on whether or not someone will be taken for the job? Even in companies where recruitment procedures are designed to be objective, there is room for subjective decisions. After all, whether or not someone is likeable is an important factor in the decision, even if it cannot be quantified. “With this kind of decision, individual liking will always have a certain influence – no-one can deny that.”

(Managing Director, metalworking company)

“And one kind of liking is the ‘mirror effect’ – an older man will see in a younger male applicant a reflection of himself as a young man. That is another reason why it is important to have women in leading positions, that is in management,” added Anne.

### Checklist for questions relating to recruitment/promotion

- How many vacant positions were there in the course of the year?
- How many applications were received?
- How many applicants were interviewed?
- How many women were interviewed, and how many men?
- How many new people were recruited?
- How many people were promoted?
- How many women and how many men were accepted for which new positions?



### **What can I do as a Works Council member?**

- Use the participation rights that you have under the German Works Constitution Act.
- Make sure that the job advert is gender neutral, as prescribed by law.
- Make sure that job adverts in areas where women are under-represented specifically address women and encourage them to apply.
- Demand that reasons be given for decisions on selection of applicants for jobs.
- Work with company management and the human resources department to find ways of making job interviews more objective, for example by using a questionnaire. The objective is genuinely gender-neutral, objective selection based on the ability and aptitude of applicants.
- Suggest that women should also be included as interviewers or in the recruitment team; simply the presence of a woman changes the atmosphere and contents of a job interview.
- Demand the abolition of gender-related selection criteria, e.g. empathy, charming, hard-working (related to women); assertive, resilient (related to men).
- Check whether the abilities and skills required are really in line with the demands of the job.
- Find out what personal data of women and what personal data of men are entered in the documents. If there are differences in the recording of data between men and women, make sure this practice is stopped.
- Call for measures to counteract prejudice in the company, e.g. by selecting young women for placements in the company (particularly in technical and scientific areas, by employment of female students working to pay for university studies, and by agreement to cooperate with female candidates doing their doctorates on company-related topics).
- Change procedures so that functions traditionally performed by men are transferred to women.
- And finally, make sure that no new criteria are introduced in job descriptions such as would create much higher barriers for women (e.g. requirements for flexible working locations and working times).

### Sample form for recording female and male applicants / number of applications in the past five years

(This form can also be used for recording actual appointments.)

	Total	Of which:			
		Commercial	Technical	Services	Production
Women					
Men					

“Incidentally, I like what your friend said about the idea she had of the fox and the vixen! Tell me quickly, without thinking about it: What passes through your mind if I say ‘A group of students rushed into the room.’” Anne looked at Frieder, puzzled. And he continued “Language creates reality, and at the same time it reflects reality. The example I just mentioned has been used a number of times to find out what images people see when they hear that sentence. What does it make you think of?” “No idea”, replied Anne curtly, suspecting that this was just the beginning of a pointless debate. And Frieder gave the answer “Practically everyone who hears that sentence imagines a group of young men. No women! So there is no question of women being implicitly ‘included’ when we use a general term such as ‘students’.”

“I realise that language is important for you as a journalist,” said Anne, “but we really do have more important problems right now. One of the organisers in Brussels introduced me to the others as an ‘Ingenieurin’ (feminine form of the word for ‘engineer’). That reminded me of the woman quoted in an IG Metall magazine, who said ‘Ich bin Ingenieur’ (i.e. the masculine or gender-neutral form), ‘I am an engineer. We have had equal opportunities for years. And now? The word Ingenieur is changed to Ingenieurin for women, but we get less pay and no equality of opportunities.’ I can only agree with her.”

“I certainly agree that using a feminine word for the job title does not automatically create equal opportunities”, said Frieder. “What I’m trying to say is that our language makes women invisible. For a long time it said in our passports ‘Der Inhaber dieses Passes ist Deutscher’ (the holder of this pass is a German national), i.e. it used the masculine forms. But it was intended to refer to women, as well. It would hardly be conceivable for only the feminine forms to be used in a passport, saying ‘Die Inhaberin dieses Passes ist Deutsche.’”



REISEPÄSSIN

*Gender-bias in the wording of German passports*

## 6. Discovery of the “male bonus”

**Pay.** Lisa and Anne work their way through wage and salary groups

Frieder loves playing with words. “Hello, you fabulous foxy” he said cheerfully into the phone when he called her the next day. “Listen, I have to tell you something. A little splash of news which has cheered up the whole of our office – I’m sure you’ll like it.” “Fire away.” “Right. It’s a report from the dpa press agency that, for the first time in years, not a single underground train had to be cancelled during the rush hour in London, and that there was a sharp rise in the number of on-schedule trains. Why is that?” and Frieder paused to raise the suspense: “Because more women drivers have been recruited recently. And the women get to work on time.” Anne laughed. “Well! I wonder if our newspapers will have the courage to report that.”



On the way to the human resources department not long afterwards, Anne met a colleague from service allocation. She had known her for some years. “What has happened?” asked Anne straight out. Her colleague, normally full of energy, looked rather depressed. “What can I say? There’s something that’s really bugging me today”. “Come on,” said Anne, with a gesture of invitation, “let’s go get a cup of coffee”.

Her colleague told her about a friend of hers who had been offered a good job. “But he turned it down. Because the job is in the Eastern Laender, and he would earn less there. I can understand the fact that he didn’t take the job. But what annoys me is simply the fact that we here in the Eastern Laender don’t even get asked. We simply get less money, and that’s the end of it. We get less pay for exactly the same work, simply because before German unification we were living on the wrong side of the border.”

Anne could not get the matter out of her mind, and later when she was back in her office she tried to sort out her ideas. This unequal treatment was simply beyond her scope of action. She did what she could, and wrote a detailed letter to the Union Executive.

She was very glad when Lisa phoned her just then. She told her friend what was on her mind, and that soon got them into a general discussion on the matter. And then Lisa told Anne what she was working on. “To start with, pay is a milestone on the way to equal rights. Both the

Directives of the European Union and the law here in Germany, that is the Code of Civil Law and the Basic Law, stipulate quite clearly that men and women must get equal pay for equal or equivalent work and work of equal value. The EU has just updated the Equal Opportunities Directive, emphasising the fact that the member states are required to establish the principle of equal rights. Right?” “Right,” said Anne, “but what are you driving at?” “Just recently, a colleague came to me and said:

‘There are male colleagues who are one, two or in some cases even three salary grades above me. But they do practically the same work. They had done something different before, and then they came to us and said they had such and such a salary, and they wanted to keep it. Personally, I believe there should be equal pay for equal work.’”

Lisa described to Anne in detail what steps she had then taken. Lisa was appalled again and again by the enormous income differences – in 1997, a woman working full-time in the Western Laender earned an average of 75% of the annual gross income of a man, and in the Eastern Laender the figure was just under 94%. The higher the educational level, the greater the income difference – women having graduated from colleges, working full-time, earned only 69% of what their male colleagues were earning. And the gap increased still further with increasing age. Older women (60 years or more) did not even earn 66% of what their male counterparts were earning (Western Laender), or 77% (Eastern Laender).

*Appalling  
differences*

## **Pay analysis**

“It sounds impossible, but that’s what happens!” said Lisa, looking closer at the case of her colleague. “A real mystery, a kind of Loch Ness Monster. I’m going to tackle this Monster.”

And she started examining the collective bargaining agreements and the company agreements. How do they assess the work of men and women? How do they assess and remunerate comparable activities? Do they contain forms of words which are apparently gender-neutral, but which have different impact on women and men? Who gets bonus payments? And who does not?

“Age, sector, skills, function, work experience, physical age” were areas she noted down where disadvantages crept in for women.



She approached the human resources department to ask for the data of the individual employees. The first thing she checked was their grading:

- What is the grading of male and female employees?
- What is the distribution of wage and salary groups between men and women, including bonus payments (bonuses specified in collective bargaining and bonuses outside of collective bargaining)?
- Do the procedures used involve discrimination against women in the practice of performance assessment?
- Are there any other regulations for compensation of strains and stresses that lead to discrimination?
- How many women and how many men were upgraded in the past year?



It was soon evident that in general men get more favourable grading.

### Grading

Sample statistics of current classification of male and female workers

Pay groups	Women (absolute)	Women (%)	Men (absolute)	Men (%)	Women's share
Grade 1	0	0.0	1	2.6	0.0
Grade 2					
Grade 3					
Grade 4					
Grade 5					
Grade 6					
Grade 7					
Grade 8					
Total	41	100	38	100 <sup>1</sup>	

<sup>1</sup> Rounded

Reading from top to bottom, this shows the allocation of women and men to the individual pay grades. Reading from left to right, it shows the percentage of women in the respective pay grades (see right-hand column, "Women's share").

Lisa studied the table and did not like what she saw. “Some 80% of women are in pay grades 3 and 4. For men, the figure is only around 55%. But in grade 6, the percentage for women drops to 2.4% of women, while the percentage for men is around 21%”, she noted, putting a big exclamation mark next to the paragraph.

How does that happen? She knows a quick answer to that from her own experience – men mostly take the initiative to get themselves into a higher grade. And above all, the work done mainly by women is normally assessed and paid as inferior to that of men. And then, abilities which are associated with the stereotype of men’s activities are a part of the assessment of traditional men’s jobs. But not vice versa. For example, as Anne had described, work in the controlling station was assessed as physically hard, and paid accordingly. But in caring professions for the elderly, for example, the hard physical work of lifting and moving old, sick people is not reflected in payment.

“The care taken by women, their organising ability, their high level of social competence, their linguistic skill, and so on – all those things are regarded more or less as a free extra in their work. For men, everything is counted as an extra”, said Lisa, still annoyed about it when she phoned Anne. “It’s all packaged so cleverly”.

**Checklist: possible causes of discrimination in the course of job assessment**

- Strains occurring in jobs dominated by women, e.g. physical strength in nursing personnel, are not included in assessment
- Different criteria are applied in the assessment of jobs dominated by men versus those dominated by women: “extensive skills”, and “extensive and comprehensive skills”.
- Double and triple counting of criteria that cover similar contents and favour male-dominated groups (e.g. “knowledge” and “thinking”).
- Discriminatory interpretation of criteria or the use of criteria which tend to discriminate, where women and men meet these criteria to differing degrees for social or physical reasons (e.g. physical strength).
- Coupling of criteria, e.g. consideration of “particular responsibility” only where this is associated with “extensive and comprehensive technical skills and performance on own initiative”, and
- Disproportionately high weighting of criteria that apply mainly to male-dominated areas (e.g. muscular strength).
- Assessment of demanding parts of the activity profile, requiring extensive and many-sided skills, only if they take up a specified amount of the time, e.g. 50% of the job.

“That’s the ‘male bonus’,” said Lisa, and continued:

- Men are often graded higher than is justified by the skills they have.
- Men are often graded higher than women with the same skills.
- Women are often graded and employed below their skill level.“

For a long time, Anne did not even think of the idea that there could be major differences in payment. She was simply not used to that. In the GDR nobody would even have thought of giving different payment to women and men. “I simply have to look into this,” said Anne, suddenly resolute. “I just can’t get it out of my mind.”

So Lisa suggested “Why don’t you take a look at pay supplements and social security payments, too? – all kinds of performance-related pay and piece work, and bonuses.” “I suppose they’re also hideouts for the monster ‘Nessie’” joked Anne, and Lisa laughed “Oh, Nessie has built a real luxury home there, I can tell you that.”

## Where are the possible discrimination potentials in piecework and bonus work?

Lisa made a detailed list of everything she had found out, all the things that have to be watched:

### Piece work

- Calculation of standard times (standard times may be calculated too conservatively; there may be distinctions between “women’s areas” and “men’s areas” (different setup times, cycle times, etc.))
- Selection and application of methods of data recording (e.g. unfavourable methods of data recording; data cannot be tracked, are not representative, or cannot be monitored).
- Are there different average earnings for waiting times in the “women’s areas” and “men’s areas”?
- Are there different rights of complaint in “women’s areas” and “men’s areas”?

### Bonus payments

- Bonus reference quantities not suitable to give equal earning potentials in “women’s areas” and “men’s areas”.
- Standards performance may be set unfavourably (e.g. with respect to machine utilisation factor)
- Regulation of maximum and minimum levels: “women’s areas” may be disadvantaged
- Bonus earnings in the lower pay grades may be lower than in the upper pay grades

Bonuses and other freely negotiable additional payments give companies a lot of room for manoeuvre. Room which, so experience shows, are rarely to women:

- Function and activity related bonuses
- Difficulty and time related bonuses
- Other bonuses (e.g. social/family bonuses)
- Discretionary payments, extra payments, bonuses
- Remuneration above the level of collective bargaining agreements, e.g. discretionary social security payments.



The Works Council colleague that Lisa had phoned in anger at the time to talk to him about the crass differences in payment found that less spectacular than she did. “Yes, maybe it comes out in favour of us men quite often”, he remarked, and concluded:

“It is fair enough to claim that performance assessment comes out lower for women. I can’t give a percentage, but it’s plain to see that bonus payments are lower.”

**What can I do as a Works Council member?**

- Ask for the data of employees and evaluate them by gender (all pay components, and also social security payments, etc.).
- Check grading of employees of each gender.
- Contact the trade union and check whether the employees are correctly graded.
- Invite external experts who can help you to check the pay system and/or the work assessment system used.
- Give training particularly to female Works Council members on issues of remuneration, collective bargaining policy and work assessment.
- Inform employees of the elements that make up their pay and on Plant Agreements and the collective bargaining agreement.
- Make use of codetermination rights in specification of the payment system.

**Suggestion for collecting company data**

Table: Number of full-time employees by grade, e.g. in industry

Distribution of female workers (L) and supervisors (M)	Number of men	Number of women	Men (%)	Women (%)
L1 (female workers)				
L2				
L3				
M1 (female supervisors)				
M2				

Note: the number of wage groups may differ, depending on the collective bargaining agreement. Depending on the individual company, the analysis could also include breakdown by technical and commercial grades. In this case, remuneration groups T... and C... could be entered in the table.

**Table: Average payment of full-time employees by grade, e.g. in industry**

Distribution of female workers (L) and supervisors (M)	Average pay, € men	Average pay, € women
L1 (female workers)		
L2		
L3		
M1 (female supervisors)		
M2		

## 7. Dead-ends and springboards

### **Employee histories / promotion and career opportunities.** Anne and Lisa hit the glass ceiling

A few weeks pass by. Anne and Lisa are often in contact to exchange ideas – the “Bavaria-Berlin connection” as Frieder (from the West himself) calls this growing friendship. One evening, Lisa phones Anne, and tells her “I found this fantastic article today!”, and she reads it out:

“The representation of women in management positions is still less than their average representation in employment, but there is a continuous positive development. In the past twelve years the percentage of women more than tripled related to the total number of management positions. It rose from 4% to 13%. Among managers under-30, there are now just as many women as men (about 7% of all management employees, according to the micro-census 2000). More and more women are taking on management positions, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – in those companies they already account for 16% of middle management, that is twice as much as in large companies. At top management level in SMEs, women account for 8% of executives.”

“At last,” exclaimed Anne, “that’s really good news!” “Yes, isn’t it” said Lisa, “and it fits in with the good news I got from Lena this morning. She has been accepted in a mentoring project. The company urgently needs good people. And Lena has been working on a research project there for some time alongside her studies. So she already has links with the company. What about that?” “That’s great,” said Anne, “and it also reminds me that I wanted to get mentoring introduced at our company”. “Do you know where the word ‘mentoring’ comes from?” asked Lisa. Anne said she didn’t, and Lisa explained “I didn’t know either, until Lena told me. It comes from the second book of the Odyssey, where Athene takes on the disguise of Mentor, as a counsellor to accompany Telemachus, the son of Odysseus. Mentor/Athene supports and instructs the young prince as was the custom in those times, and helps him to deal with new, difficult situations by her advice and teaching. In the end, all that helped Telemachus to become a self-confident young man.”

After the phone conversation, Lisa wrote “Mentoring” on a bright yellow post-it note, and stuck the note on the edge of her PC monitor. She also wants to get the concept established in her company.

Lisa had been struck by Lena's enthusiasm as she gave her this description: "The role of mentors is to give continuous counselling to employees who are suitable for higher positions, to help them in their development within the company, and to have an open ear for all the questions and problems they may have. To tell them about the experience that they themselves had on their way up the ladder. To point out possible stumbling blocks, and to show them how to overcome some obstacles more easily. In brief, to help them with their know-how and their contacts, and to save these up-and-coming managers a great many detours and unnecessary conflicts in their progress. Just like Mentor/Athene in the Greek legend".

*The story of  
Mentor/Athene*

That evening, the Lisa could not get the story of Mentor out of her mind. Her thoughts circled around career and advancement. At last, she sat down and tried to get some structure into her ideas. This is what she noted down:

"In the real conditions of a company, there are two different types of situation:

- Standstill: grading, position and function remain unchanged.
- Advancement and career progress: movement in smaller or larger steps up to better positions, with higher grading. This may be linked with a move to another area of the company, for example from production to administration.

Men and women tend to have different developments:

- Glass ceiling: with very few exceptions, women tend not to get further than a certain level on the career ladder. They can see that there is room to go up further. They can even see that it is possible to get there. But it is almost impossible for women. The technical term for this is 'vertical segregation'.
- Men often not only have more interesting fields of activity open to them, but also middle-management and senior management positions. They get active preparation and encouragement for such positions.
- Women are not only concentrated in the lower grades, but are also channelled into quite specific areas of employment. Men work in production and development, while women work in administration. The technical term for this is 'horizontal segregation'."

*Dead-ends and  
springboards*

She mailed these notes to Anne, asking her to “take a glance at them.” Not long afterwards, she got the answer from Berlin: “Can’t add anything to that. Except for one thing: in the former East Germany, women worked in many jobs that sounded really exotic to women in West Germany. Okay, track mending tended to be a male domain, and there weren’t all that many company managers. But on the whole we did not have phenomena like the ‘glass ceiling’”.

### Activities

Lisa wrote back: “the key factors in promotion within the company are the area of employment and the activities connected with it – management functions are mainly reserved for men, in all sectors. the auxiliary jobs, with lower grading, are reserved for women.” And Anne replied “Yes, we have men and women train conductors. But just try travelling around Germany, and you will find the women employed on regional lines. No, not driving the engine – in service functions! While men are employed on Intercity trains. And even where women are employed in the long distance high-speed trains IC or ICE , it is mostly not in positions of responsibility. And in the service sector, the women are employed at the counters and complaint desks, while the men are doing the technical jobs.”

“would you agree,” asked Lisa, “with what i have noticed, that women are often in positions that do not offer career opportunities, that they have dead-end jobs? while men often have the springboard positions? positions that are already much better paid, and positions that give much better chances of advancement and career progress?”

“All of us have to demand more from women. It’s not just a question of the structures, or the men. Women simply have to stand up for themselves and take on responsibility if we want to change things. That means we have to give much to women, and expect much from them.” Lisa agreed. “women often expect the world to come to them. we have to get away from that attitude, and get out of the waiting room. women cannot expect to be at the front of the line for management positions. let me quote one plant manager who was against the idea of one (just one!) woman getting into a better position – ‘let’s say that to have a woman as plant manager is not our goal. of course we want women to have a career in our company. but it doesn’t help if we have one woman as a head of department, and do nothing for the rest of our employees.’”



Lisa's yellow post-it notes have multiplied very quickly. Now she positions some of them one above the other, to give this checklist:

### **Checklist for employment questions**

- Is there a balanced distribution of female and male employees in all functions?
- Are there functions that are performed only by women or only by men?
- Which activities correspond to which grades?
- What percentage of women are there at middle and top management levels?
- Are there areas in the company where important experience can be gathered for promotion within the company?
- If there are such positions, are they mainly held by men or women?
- In which areas is there part-time employment?
- Is promotion within the company possible for part-time employees?

### **Sample statistics for allocation to activities for all employees**

Activities	Women			Men		Women's share
	Absolute	%	Part-time	Absolute	%	

### **Developing initiatives – taking action**

The remaining post-it notes gave key ideas on how Lisa could take the initiative in the company.

#### **Mentoring projects for women**

was a definite item on the list. But what else could she do? Suddenly she stopped short, exclaiming “Just a moment – all the things I've noted down are definitely jobs for management! Not so much for the Works Council. I have to sow the seeds of this idea in management offices.” She continued working at her PC, adding more specific content to the key words.

### **Appraisal interviews with female employees**

Women tend to be too self-critical. While they are still checking whether they can do all the things needed for a new post, men have long since submitted their applications. Building on their own self-esteem, men simply assume they will have enough time to pick up the skills which they do not yet have but will need for the new post. Personal goals are established at annual appraisal interviews, setting out which way a person wants to develop. Actions can be derived from that. And the next year there is a joint assessment of whether the goals have been achieved.

### **Set up promotion pools**

But be careful! Men will recognise the opportunities and force their way into the pools. Information on access to the pools and on the opportunities attached to them tends to be given via informal channels. And women tend to be almost completely excluded from those channels. So it is essential to work for transparency in this area. She was happy with her idea, and was just shutting down her PC when she remembered something that had happened in Anne's company not long before.

### **When women compete with men**

"Just imagine, Lisa" said Anne on the phone, "now that the matter is settled, there is a male colleague who made an interesting admission to me, saying 'to be quite honest, that was a problem of subjective perception on the part of men. They simply didn't see what the situation was really like! If a woman gets promotion, we are absolutely convinced that she is getting preferential treatment. I think we men tend to be easily upset in that area. But if it's a man that gets promotion, nobody asks any questions – at most he has been successful against another man. But with women, the first question everybody asks is whether she has the ability to do the job at all.'"

*Just once, in a man's world...*

Anne paused for a moment, before adding "That's something I certainly notice, that difference in attitude and treatment. And a career is self-evident for a man – it simply means he is doing well. But if a woman says she wants a career, that is perceived as negative, and people say she is career-mad. It seems men have a built-in right to whatever they want."

"Tell me, what really happened?" Lisa remembers she could hardly wait to find out. At last Anne got to the point: "Altogether, there were 30 men and 5 women who successfully completed their training as supervisors



and technicians. So all of them had equal qualifications. Then once – just once! – in all those years, a woman was selected for a vacant post. You can't imagine the storm the men raised at top management level – yes, right up to the very top!" "And what happened in the end?" "There were interminably long, really hefty discussions. Our arguments were simply dismissed by everyone. I felt like I was screaming into a storm. It seemed that not a single word was getting through. Until we hit on the idea of producing statistics – how many women have got promotion? To senior positions? Altogether there are 62 management posts at 3 different levels, but only one woman – this one. We enlarged the statistical table to A3 format, and produced a coloured pie chart to go with it. Very impressive, because the woman was almost completely invisible on the chart. It was only that visual demonstration that calmed people down. But the lesson we learnt was that in future we would have to take precautions."

### **Gender breakdown of management posts in a metalworking company, 2001**

	1 <sup>st</sup> management level	2 <sup>nd</sup> management level	3 <sup>rd</sup> management level	Total
Women				
Men				
Total				

Suddenly Lisa remembered all the things she wanted to tell Anne a few days earlier, but had then forgotten. Could she still phone her? She looked at her watch and found to her surprise that it was not all that late. So she took her mobile phone and dialled Anne's number. "The way you talk has changed since Brussels," remarked Lisa cautiously. "You mean now I speak Bavarian?" said Anne, teasing her. "No, I know what you mean – using gender neutral descriptions and so on. Until recently, I refused to adopt them." Lisa could almost see her friend's grin. "You really have made a difference, with what you said about the fox and the vixen! I like those images. And then on top of that came Frieder and his story about the men-only passport. Since then, I couldn't help noticing it all the time. But still, I have to say 'One swallow doesn't make the summer begin'. Using gender-neutral forms, like adding the "-in" ending, doesn't create gender equality!" "It would be nice if that were enough. But at least the "-in" ending makes women visible. That's a start, isn't it?"



## 8. The use of equal opportunities

### Positive action for women / Equal opportunities / Awards.

Lisa finds some allies

“Don’t even think about not coming. It’s absolutely essential that you should come, and above all that you should be there the whole time!” Lisa’s whole attitude left no doubt about it, she was not in a mood for discussing the issue. So the Works Council Chairman gave a deep sigh and agreed to come, although he otherwise avoided what he deprecatingly called “women’s business”.

Lisa left his office, satisfied with herself and the world. She has arranged a meeting with the union shop stewards on the following day. She wants to give them information, and at the same time she wants to discuss with them measures for equal opportunities. It is important to her that the Works Council Chairman should be there, underscoring the importance of this work by his presence. And she had also been successful in other point – management is sending the Head of Controlling as their speaker, which is unusual. When preparing the meeting, Lisa recalled the voluntary agreement on equal opportunities made by the Federal Government with the industry federations. Personally, she would have preferred an Equal Opportunities Act. That would have made it easier, she felt, to establish positive action for women in all companies. But Lisa is making clever use of the means at her disposal. She is using the Agreement to ask company management what their attitude to equal opportunities is, and what they are planning in this area. Her idea of getting someone from management to come and speak to the shop stewards was rejected at first. The argument she used was that “shop stewards are very important in our work in the company, but that is also an opportunity for you”. It did not take long before she received management acceptance.

A buffet meal has been prepared in one of the large discussion rooms that Lisa has booked. Her Chairman had agreed to give the introduction. “Why, ten years ago, did we start programmes of positive action for women in the Works Council? I will not conceal from you the fact that the moral aspect in itself was not enough. What was more important was the high fluctuation rate which the company had among workers at the time. At the beginning there was what I would now call ‘good will’ actions. Then our colleague Ms Pauer succeeded in

*Why positive action for women?*

persuading us in the Works Council and then company management to set up a project group. The breakthrough came with the unexpectedly high level of acceptance of our part-time and working-time systems!”

The Head of Controlling was late. Meanwhile, Lisa took up an idea that had been put forward by one of the shop stewards present at the meeting. “Is positive action for women really still necessary?”

She asked participants to give their own opinions on the subject. And a lively debate followed. “No, we don’t need it any more. Sounds like we are caring for disabled people”. “As long as we do not have equal opportunities, it is an indispensable tool”. “It’s not the women who are the problem – it’s the conditions we have to live with! Just explain to me how you can be standing at the assembly line at 6am when you have a child of nursery school age and the nursery school doesn’t open till 8 o’clock!” “There are no programmes of positive action for men.” “There are so many obstacles for women that it is only right and fair for everyone to help remove some of them.”

Lisa managed to make her voice heard. “What are positive action programmes, and equal opportunities programmes in general? Basically, they are action programmes with the following aims:

- To help change existing human resources policies. Those policies currently say ‘if in doubt, select the male applicant where qualifications are equal.’ The action programmes question that, break the mould, and if possible reverse the trend for a limited time.
- To take account of the fact that many qualified and motivated women fail simply because of prejudices, which in many cases are also prevalent in the human resources department.
- To give access to a wide range of qualified people.
- To help decision makers in companies to eliminate discrimination against women and other groups of employees, be it conscious or unconscious, direct or indirect.
- To improve the balance between work and family life or work and private life for men and women.
- To eliminate discrimination of all kinds.”



By now, the speaker had arrived. “We draw up a very clear calculation of costs and benefits of equal opportunities policy”, she said. Starting up her presentation programme, she explained

<b>Potential cost/benefit for the company from equal opportunities projects</b>	
<b>Potential cost</b>	<b>Potential benefit</b>
<b>Installation of project group</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Time needed for various activities, meetings, campaigns</li></ul>	<b>More efficient use of human resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Nearly double the potential of possible future management staff and skilled employees</li><li>– Increased company loyalty, low fluctuation level, stability of regular workforce</li></ul>
<b>Appointment of officer for implementation of equal opportunities programme</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Salary</li><li>– Campaign budget</li></ul>	<b>Image improvement/Public relations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– New customers</li><li>– New qualified applicants</li><li>– New cooperation partners</li></ul>
<b>Actions, for example:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Development and implementation of projects and training concepts on the subjects of<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Equal opportunities</li><li>– Career development</li><li>– Career planning</li></ul></li></ul>	<b>Innovative corporate culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Increased motivation of workforce</li><li>– Strong identification with company</li></ul>

At that moment, the speaker was interrupted. The youth and trainee representative stood up and asked: "Is it really possible to express everything in figures? I'm thinking of things like loyalty. Surely that is more a symbolic value?" The Head of Controlling listened carefully. "Both. I would say both. An employee who is convinced of the quality of his or her company, and who expresses satisfaction among his or her friends and acquaintances, improves the standing of the company. That is a symbolic value – I would entirely agree with you there. It is easier to measure the effect inside the company. For example on the basis of the cost of initial and further training of that employee. The more loyal an employee is, and the longer he or she stays with the company, the better the investment in training. Does that answer your question?" The youth representative nodded his head. And she continued her presentation of the potential costs and benefits:

<b>Cost/benefit analysis for company from equal opportunities projects</b>	
<b>Potential cost</b>	<b>Potential benefit</b>
<b>Work/life balance arrangements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Contacts with employees during their parental leave</li> <li>– Organisational effort and coordination costs for parental leave / re-entry into company</li> <li>– Organisational effort, and possibly infrastructure and coordination costs, for flexible working time</li> <li>– Costs/support for child care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Further education investments remain within the company</li> <li>– Increased loyalty among career oriented young mothers and fathers</li> <li>– Less risk / uncertainty on recruitment</li> <li>– Potential for short-term fluctuations: Deputising for holiday and sickness absences by employees currently on parental leave.</li> <li>– Greater selection of applicants for situations vacant, recruitment</li> <li>– Knowledge of company, so only brief induction period and short update training required for re-entrants</li> <li>– Low absentee rate</li> <li>– Greater intensity of work</li> </ul>

### **Equal opportunities programmes pay for themselves**

And she closed her impressive presentation with the conclusion “Programmes for equal opportunities are worthwhile – both for the people affected and for the company.”

Lisa took the floor at once, and commented that “promotion of women also has an external impact. It raises people’s awareness of the company. At a recent conference I was talking to the head of human resources of a clothing company, and he told me this:

‘In concrete terms I have worked out that the costs amount to 170,000 euros. But we recover that from savings in advertising costs. (...) The costs of the social facilities we provide are borne by the company alone – kindergarten, cafeteria, and birthday presents account for 180,000 euros a year. That’s less than 1% of the costs incurred by absences due to illness. But they give the company a better image, and it is easier to recruit people.’”

### **Awards and audit procedures generate pressure**

“These days companies use the publicity opportunities that come from participation in award schemes,” explained Lisa. “As I’m sure you know, we have also entered ourselves for the TOTAL E-QUALITY scheme and have gained this award.”

### **What is TOTAL E-QUALITY?**

TOTAL E-QUALITY Deutschland is an association set up in 1997, which has already presented awards to 56 public and private sector organisations for their equal opportunities policies for men and women in their human resources activities. Application for the TOTAL E-QUALITY label is voluntary, and is based on self-assessment by the companies applying. Applications may be submitted by companies of all kinds that have more than 15 employees. The award comprises a certificate and the TOTAL E-QUALITY logo. This logo can be used by the award holders for marketing and public relations work. The award is valid for a three year period. Applications may be submitted to the TOTAL E-QUALITY association at any time ([www.total-e-quality.de](http://www.total-e-quality.de)).

### **Audit Beruf & Familie® (Work & Family Audit)**

The main focus of this audit is to support family awareness in human resources policy. The audit was set up in 1995 as part of the “Family Awareness in Human Resources Policy” initiative of the Hertie Foundation, which is a not-for-profit organisation. Since then, more than 60 companies have availed themselves of the consulting services provided. The audit evaluates the family-friendly measures and provisions of a company, based on a weighting system defined by a set of criteria (see [www.beruf-und-familie.de](http://www.beruf-und-familie.de)).

“These processes are useful as a way of putting pressure on companies,” said Lisa, “so as to move forward with further projects”.

After the Head of Controlling had gone, a discussion got under way. The Youth and Trainee Representative referred to the subjects mentioned and said “Aren’t these all just fine words? Programmes to enhance the company’s image, but doing nothing in reality? At any rate not for the ordinary women working in the company, at most for a few management staff, so only the company benefits from it?”

Lisa answered “Of course that’s just the job we have to do in the Works Council – to make sure that words are really followed by deeds, at every level. The Works Council Chairman and I will be paying special attention to that in the project steering group, and we will put forward proposals to make sure that happens.”

*Meeting  
everybody's needs*

Then it was time for Lisa to draw to a conclusion. “Let me conclude by adding an important point from our experience – equal opportunities just for women is not enough. That involves a danger that men will see themselves as ‘quota casualties’. And that in turn will create a lot more vehement resistance to any further activities. That will make it hard to achieve the changes in the world of work and in life in general towards a better life for all social groups. So we have to expand our strategy. We also have to take account of the changes in the needs of men; and the different needs within different groups of men. To put it in rather black-and-white terms, a fork-lift truck operator has different needs than a management executive. We’re working on it. And I’d like you all to contribute your ideas and experience.”

People were now getting more and more excited and talking among themselves, so Lisa decided it was high time to close the official part of the meeting.

While most people went straight for the buffet, one colleague approached her and said “Can I ask you something? Do these measures we’re taking put us out in front? Or is everyone else taking similar measures in any case?”

“Good question. We’re in front! We are one of those companies that have recognised that

- the equal opportunities plan has to start with human resources policy, and has to be integrated in the company’s processes; and
- it must contain agreed goals and evaluation tools. Otherwise even the best of plans are liable to get stuck right at the beginning.

### **Equal opportunities in Eastern Germany**

Anne knew just how important this day was for Lisa, and phoned her in the evening: “How was it? Satisfied?” “Very satisfied.” “Did you also talk about the Eastern Laender?” “No”, said Lisa, adding almost by way of apology, “somehow we had no particular reason to do so. And apart from that, what is it you always say? ‘Equal opportunities are not an issue for us at present’”.

“Yes, our work behaviour is very different, that’s true. Re-entry after long periods of interruption, part-time working – that is specifically the areas usually targeted by positive action measures and plant agreements with you – are not an issue in the Eastern Laender, or at least not yet. But there is enormous pressure because of the scrapping of many institutions that we had at the time of the GDR, such as

childcare facilities, and the 'Mummybus' scheme. And of course because the labour market is still in such a bad state. I'm afraid the issue will soon catch up with us!" "And there's one thing you mustn't forget", added Anne after a moment, "some women in the East perceive the equal opportunities discussion as an import from the West." "Yes," remarked Lisa, "those bossy Wessies".

**Checklist for drawing up a positive action plan and/or agreement on equal opportunities for women and men**

- Draw up an inventory of distribution of employees (collect figures).
- Secure a resolution setting out the fundamental principles.
- Draw up a concept (goals, measures, time planning specifying dates for verification, definition of responsibilities, personnel and financial resources).
- Secure implementation, monitoring tools, regular reporting requirements.





### **What can I do as a Works Council member?**

- Either with the Works Council alone or together with the employer, set up an equal opportunities committee (according to German law possible in companies with 101 or more employees; this committee is to produce proposals for concrete equal opportunities measures.
- Co-opt external experts such as trade union secretaries, external equal opportunities officers and institutions (e.g. equal opportunities officers of the local labour offices, municipal/regional advisory services for 'women at work', etc.) and other experts, consulting bodies on positive action for women / equal opportunities or gender mainstreaming.
- When calling in outside experts, make sure that they include the aspect of equal opportunities for women and men in all issues coming up for discussion.
- Take specific initiatives to improve equality of opportunities for women and men and to improve human resources planning for a better work/life balance.
- Collect material from the company to demonstrate the need for action.
- Collect arguments proving the benefits from equal opportunities measures – for both female and male employees, and for the company.
- Make sure that equal opportunities projects are supported by the Works Council; they should be an issue for the whole of the Works Council.
- Convince company management of the benefits from participating in award processes for equal opportunities.
- If your company already has the award, demand the implementation in practice of the company arrangements presented for the award application.
- Attend seminars on project management.
- Check that existing agreements are in fact implemented.

## 9. Many roads lead to more quality of life

### **Working times.** Lisa's part-time balance sheet

"I need your advice, Lisa", said Nora on day, launching straight into the subject as soon as her friend came in the door. "Our company is very restrictive in terms of working times. I want to do part-time for the coming year, so as to make some real progress with the IT course that I started alongside work, and to complete it successfully. And as I was thinking about that, I had the idea that we should produce some more attractive working time models than we have at present, together with the Works Council. I'm sure you can help me with that. With arguments and models that would fit in?" Lisa was not slow to answer: "Okay, I'll be happy to do that. Why don't you come to my office to talk about it – your Works Council Chairman and yourself?" Nora stopped to think. "Well, that's not a bad idea, but not with my Works Council Chairman. I've already talked to him, and he simply said I should ask Eugen. Eugen is very committed, and he'll most likely be the new Works Council Chairman when the current Chairman retires, which will be quite soon."

A few days later, when Nora and Eugen arrived at her office, Lisa had some informative brochures ready for them. "Working time is one of the most important elements in employment contracts. One very striking point is that men's working times are very different from those of women. It is still the case that men spend a lot more time on their work than do women." Nora interrupted her: "on earning money, if I can put it that way. In the unpaid sector, it's just the opposite! Two thirds of all the work done in the world is done by women." "Yes, our society functions rather like a family. There, too, 80 to 90% of the unpaid work is done by women. And that's still the case," added Lisa. And she continued:

### **Working time in reality**

"Working time models also reflect the male life pattern. They assume that gainful employment is at the centre of people's lives. There is nothing in that pattern to allow for private commitments, housework, child care, looking after other members of the family, or simply leisure and recreation. Unpaid work is mainly done by women, whether or not they have a paid job as well. And women are also more likely to take up part-time work, because somehow they have to find a way to combine working life and family life."

“I have read reports which say that nearly 20% of men in full-time jobs work an average of 45 hours or more,” remarked Eugen. “Exactly,” said Lisa. “There are two conflicting trends there: there are some people who are working more and more (mainly men) – longer than the 35 to 40 hours provided by collective bargaining – while at the same time there are more and more people working part time (mainly women). Particularly stressful working time models such as shift work and night work are likewise on the increase – the proportion of employees doing shifts or night work was up from 13% in 1995 to 18% in 1999. But the good news is that more and more men are saying they want to work less.”

### Part-time working

About 16.6% of the workforce in Germany is doing part-time work (1998) – that is relatively low compared with other European Union countries. The majority of part-time workers in Germany, as in other countries, are women. 86% of the 4 million or so part-time workers are women. 36.4% of all women in gainful employment work part-time, but only 4.3% of the men in gainful employment.

There is a significant difference between the Western part and the Eastern part of Germany. Some 85% of all part-time employees are employed in the Western Laender. The number of women in part-time work both in the Western Laender and the Eastern Laender has been rising for years – in the Western Laender, 30% of employed women were working part time in 1991, rising to 42% in 2000. In the Eastern Laender the figure was up from 17.5% in 1991 to 23% in 2000.

“There are now a number of different part-time working schemes – with reduced daily, weekly or monthly working times. And part-time is even possible for shift workers. There are many different kinds of part-time arrangements in the individual collective bargaining agreements,” explained Lisa. Eugen had been listening very carefully, and said “Our General Manager always says ‘We can’t just let everyone decide their own working times. That makes everything more complicated. There has to be someone in the secretary’s office from 8 in the morning till 5 in the afternoon – surely that’s obvious!’ And he thought that was the end of the discussion.”

*Part-time working schemes*

“Ah, but there are good arguments against that,” said Lisa. “Starting with improved employee satisfaction. And there are sound business

arguments, too. You can quote our head of human resources, who sees it this way:

‘Companies always say that kindergartens are too expensive. But if you have to put recruitment ads in the papers every week, that costs piles of money, too. (...) There are many organisations which have not yet grasped the fact that if they let their people work part-time, they only have to pay a corresponding proportion of the wages or salary. And productivity is a lot higher than with full-time employees. We allow anyone to opt for part-time work in our company. Even I could choose to work part-time. In our company that is possible at any level.’”

“I always have to stress the fact that part-time working does not mean half-time working – far from it!” added Lisa. “That’s what nearly everyone thinks when they hear the expression ‘part-time’. But 30 hours a week is also part-time. Part-time means individual reduction of working time. That’s relevant for you, Nora, because the right to part-time working has been established in legislation since the beginning of 2001. That gives employees an entitlement to work part-time. Employers can reject this for ‘operational reasons’, but they have to be able to provide evidence that these reasons really do exist, in court if necessary. In addition, it is possible to choose to work up to 30 hours a week during parental leave. Incidentally,” she added, turning to Nora, “you are in the more favourable situation because you want to move from full-time working to part-time working for a certain period. It would be problematic if you had signed a part-time contract and wanted to change to full-time work – that is often more difficult, although there is a legal entitlement to do so. That’s why we always try to give employees up-front advice on this point.”

But then Lisa added a warning note “The bad news is that part-time working mostly doesn’t provide enough money to live on. And mostly it doesn’t provide enough contributions to pension funds, either. And part-time workers have practically no opportunities for promotion, etc. All of those are also the reasons why men very rarely choose to work part-time.” “I know only one man at our company that might choose to work part-time”. Eugen looked at Nora, and she laughed. “You mean our triathlon freak, who would like more time for training?” “Exactly. And I think the colleagues at work would understand that. Sport is his life, it’s as simple as that. But who else? If any other man said he wanted to work part time, I expect everyone would laugh him out of the room. They would call him a mummy’s boy, or a wimp, or worse.” “I have the impression that younger men take a much more laid-back approach,”

replied Nora. “I’ve noticed that they have much more self-assurance. I had a conversation with one of them on the train just recently, and he explained the reactions of some of his workmates quite simply: ‘People are not used to the idea of a man going onto part-time work to look after his children. There are certain traditions which are very deep-rooted, that the man has to be the breadwinner, and bring home the money for the family.’”

*Part-time work for  
full-time life*

### **Part-time work for managers**

“Eugen,” exclaimed Nora suddenly, “do you remember the big fuss we had a few months ago?” He looked at her in puzzlement for a moment, and then a smile flashed across his face. “Oh yes, we won’t forget that bust-up in a hurry!” He turned to Lisa and asked her “Did Nora tell you about it?” Lisa nodded, remembering the incident very clearly. But Eugen couldn’t resist telling her again: “Our boss and his wife, who is also a partner in the company, were having quite a noisy argument in his office. And in the course of the argument she said ‘You only work part-time as well, to be quite accurate, and you get a whole salary from the company! You’re practically never here beyond lunchtime – after that you have all your consulting work, your meetings of various supervisory boards, and your expert reports to write.’”



And Eugen reflected “We all thought that those ideas were really interesting, with the suggestion that in reality he only works part-time. For normal employees, part-time working is a major obstacle to any kind of career. Anyone – man or woman – will confirm that. One friend of mine told me he had to pay a very high price for part-time working, but he said ‘okay, maybe it’s a millstone round my neck in terms of career, but I get so much in return – with the family, with the children. Life is so short!’”

Lisa joined in the discussion again “But it could work. Management executives on part-time work would have a fantastic role model effect. And at the same time they would free up a part-time post for a female manager, too,” she added with a grin.

### Lisa's part-time balance sheet

Lisa stood up and turned over the flipcharts hanging in her office. "We keep on re-opening the discussion on part-time. Because without a culture change, it's women that bear the burden of part-time working. Women choose part-time to cope with their double or triple burden. Men choose part-time to have more leisure, to indulge in their hobbies, or to pursue continuing education. The only solution can be for men and women to work shorter hours in general. And in particular for men and women to use the leisure time they gain for fairer distribution of work in the family, too." And finally, she found a sheet framed in colour. "Until that happens, this is the situation:"

- Women are the part-time factor in companies, reducing cost and increasing profit, while hardly any men work part-time, despite the new legislation.
- It is very exceptional for part-time workers to have any chance of promotion.
- Part-time work means part-time pay. That will rarely be enough to secure the livelihood of the part-time worker. So single parents are often on the edge of the poverty line.
- Anyone who works part-time for a long period will find it hard to secure a reasonable pension.
- For many women, part-time working is the only way to combine working life with family life, and to organise their life in a reasonable way.
- More and more men are discovering part-time working as a way of enhancing their quality of life, and are accepting lower pay in order to do so.
- It is often harder to move from part-time working to full-time working than vice versa."



Lisa remembered a discussion she had had with Anne some time before. "I think we should always bear in mind that the situation in the East is very different from ours," she said to Nora and Eugen. "The working time debate is very different in the Eastern Laender. The big issues there are unemployment and long distances to get to work."

### Working time accounts

“Have working time accounts become better established now?” asked Eugen. “I liked the idea. That would mean I could fulfil my dream of making study trips.”

“That’s right. Working time accounts are one of a whole range of working time schemes that help people to organise their private lives better. The difference between the time actually worked and the time agreed in collective bargaining can be saved up in a working time account, as a time credit. Working time accounts can be fed from flexi-time working, from irregular working hours, or from overtime. This means that employees can use the resulting long blocks of leisure time to pursue their private interests, or for their own continuing education. That is already common practice at our company and others. But we always have to put the brakes on our men – they tend to extend their working time more and more in order to collect more in their accounts. That is particularly dangerous with long-term accounts. But that is not their purpose. They’re ruining their health. And apart from that,” she laughed, “they just don’t get around to doing any work in the family at all.”

### Annual working time

“Then what’s the difference between that and annual working time?” asked Nora. And Lisa explained to her “Annual working time models are simply a special case of working time accounts. The period within which the account has to be balanced is one year. All in all, working time accounts and annual working times have led to far-reaching changes in working time arrangements. Working time is no longer distributed evenly, but is spread unevenly over a given period, normally a year, depending on the needs of the company and of the individual. Nora looked at her questioningly. “Sounds good to me. But the way you describe it, it sounds like you have some reservations about it?” Lisa nodded. “Experience shows that often enough it is the interests of the company that determine the arrangement of working times. That is one reason why the model is quite popular with companies. It enables them to make working times flexible and to match them to operating requirements.”

Eugen looked at his notes: “That’s all very informative. But, as always, the devil’s in the detail. I think I can hold the discussion in the Works Council on this basis:

- Introduction of flexi-time with binding rules for balancing of flexi-time credits.
- Entitlement for employees with children to distribute their working time so that they can fit in with the times their children are in the care of a day nursery, kindergarten or school.
- Promotion of part-time activities of women and men, i.e. general definition of all positions with an option for part-time working, including at management level.
- Encouragement of part-time working that is close to full-time, e.g. 30 or 32 working hours.

Nora agreed with him. Both of them thanked Lisa for all the information she had given them. But it seemed there was still something bothering Eugen. Just as he was going, he turned around again to Lisa and said “But to be honest, I don’t believe that what you women want will ever become reality – I mean the idea that if everyone works less in the office they will work more at home. Why should we men give up the convenience that we have now? And apart from that, looking around at my friends and acquaintances, I’m not even so sure that the women would be willing to give up any of their responsibilities!?” “You’re probably right there,” said Lisa, cautiously. “Despite all the achievements, we still have a long way to go. And we women have to take action and serve notice on the lazy man’s licence.” “That’s a fantastic way of putting it, Lisa”, laughed Nora, “I’ll have to remember that!” And she became serious again. “There have been clear proposals on the table for a long time in all the trade unions, as at IG Metall. Men are benefiting from these working time models, just like women. And men are particularly in need of relief from excessively long, exhausting working times! At the same time, companies are gradually understanding better that long working times may be accompanied by a loss in quality – nobody can tell me they can produce top performance for 12 hours at a stretch. At present, men do not sufficiently realise what’s in it for them. For example, the marvellous experience of seeing their own children growing up, and playing a part in their development. In other words being a great dad, rather than maybe just sometime later being a great-granddad. True, isn’t it?” Lisa and Eugen nodded in agreement.

*Stop the lazy  
man’s licence*



**What can I do as a Works Council member?**

- Inform and advise employees who want to make use of their right to part-time working. If necessary, guide them through the individual steps of the process.
- Analyse the specific working time distribution by gender. Who is working in what posts with what working time arrangements? This information is indispensable as a basis for thinking and discussion where there are problems with working time, or where there are changes planned in working time in the company.
- Play an active part in working time arrangements, particularly where changes are planned. Organise this participation as a continuous and comprehensive process, with equal involvement of the employees and Works Council members, and the employer's side.
- Check the need for action: what problems have occurred in connection with working time? What new requirements have come up in connection with working time? Who is affected by this? You should also take a look at days of illness, broken down by gender and working time.
- When agreeing on working time accounts, make sure that use of this system is a voluntary decision by employees, and that there are clear definitions and safeguards for their rights to use credited hours and for their entitlements in general.
- Set up a project group, and conduct a joint problem analysis.
- Agree on common goals.
- Work out a pilot project.

**Example of working time statistics**

	Normal working time *)	Part-time **)	Short working time	Night/ shift work	Other time models ***)
Total					
Female blue-collar					
Male blue-collar					
Female white-collar					
Male white-collar					

\*) Normal working time in company is ... hours

\*\*) Average ... hours

\*\*\*) Which models? .....

## 10. Do only women have families?

**Work/Life balance.** Lisa and Anne find so many ways to achieve it

Anne was speechless. Nobody noticed that, because nobody had expected an answer in any case. What had happened? As so often, Anne was walking around the company, together with some of her colleagues. To tell the employees personally about some news, and also to get a picture of what was happening in the various parts of the company. They were just sitting down together in the amenities room, and the discussion they were having was nothing new. It was about the superhuman efforts required from women in their everyday working lives, due to the long distances they travel to work. And suddenly one of them said out loud, in front of the whole group, what she had otherwise only mentioned in conversations with perhaps one other person. "I want my 'household day' back again, and the 'Mummybus'. You can say what you like – that really did make life easier!" For a moment, you could have heard a pin drop. Then all the women broke into spontaneous applause.

*'Household day'  
for men?*

"I understand those women. I understand them only too well!" said Anne when she phoned her friend that evening – sounding rather tired, for a change. "Stop!" replied Lisa at once. "You do have a point there – we do need all kinds of arrangements to help people achieve a balance between working life and family life, that's true. But wait! Women should not be the only ones concerned in that process! What we need is facilities which make it possible for everyone to get their working life and their private life organised. The old institution of the 'household day' in East Germany was symbolic of the fact that the household was something for women, regardless of the fact that there were more equal rights in East Germany." "But many of us did use the household day as a day for ourselves," objected Anne. "I don't dispute that for a moment, Anne, but that does not change the fact that the provisions were exclusively for women. As I said before, the 'household day' had symbolic importance. That is underscored by the fact that it was practically impossible for men to get a 'household day'. If you used it differently, that's fine, but it doesn't change the basic concept. Just think of the opposite idea – would it have been conceivable to give exclusively men one day off per month and call it their 'household day'?"

Lisa did not even wait for Anne's reply. "No. You see. I always turn things around like that to find out whether something is a stereotype, or

whether it works against women or against men. If you consider that only 2% of fathers in Germany take parental leave, you can see how far we still have to go before we have reasonable conditions for combining work and family life.”

### **... we want half the Earth**

“But Lisa! What are we to do until then? What can I tell my women here and now? Am I just to console them with the idea of heaven?” Lisa had never known Anne to be so depressed. “No, that’s too long to wait – for me, too, Anne. We also say ‘We don’t want half of heaven – we want half the Earth’. And we want it right now.” Lisa cleared her throat. “Look, you have already achieved so much in your company for the work/life balance. Annual working time is a model that makes it easier to combine work and family life. Both for men and for women, incidentally. And qualification seminars for re-entrants, starting six months in advance, and the work of the family service, helping to find child care facilities! That really is a lot.”

At last, Anne seemed to get back some of her optimism. “Yes, you’re right.” “In the Eastern Laender you still have this close-meshed network of child care facilities. I wish we had as many in the West! Did you hear the item in the news a couple of days about the birth rate? France has the highest birth rate of all the EU countries. And why is that? Because they have established a functioning network of child care facilities. That could set an example.” Anne interrupted: “And make sure you also get facilities for children under three years old. We don’t have those, but they are needed. And if I can tell you about some more of our experience,” she added with a quiet laugh, “some of our child care facilities have become much more expensive. That is more and more of a problem. Because our pay is lower than yours, and there are more women being pushed into part-time working, often against their will, and the situation is particularly difficult if their partner is out of work. Then child care is out of the question.” “Yes,” said Lisa thoughtfully, “I had never looked at it that way before.”

Later on she asked Anne “Do you think your colleagues are at least fully informed – after all, we in Germany have a lot of legal provisions to help combine work and family life – they are really exemplary.” “If only I knew,” said Anne. “Some of them are very well informed, some half-informed, and others not at all. But that gives me an idea – I’ll put the information on the Intranet.” “Why don’t you use the trade union brochure as a model for that?” suggested Lisa. “It includes all the measures, and explains them very well.”

*Exemplary  
legislation*

- Parental leave, can be taken by either parent
- Part-time working during parental leave
- Part-time working pursuant to the new Part-time Act
- Provisions in company agreements and in collective bargaining agreements on work and family (e.g. parental leave, interruption of employment to start a family, release to care for sick family members, working from home, individual working time models)

Lisa heard Anne laughing quietly. “What’s up?”, she asked. And Anne answered “We’ve just said that the household day was symbolic of the fact that women are responsible for the household. Now you’re telling me about measures where we have to be just as careful that they are not only used by women. In other words, positive action for family life is often equated with positive action for women.” “I know, said Lisa, “we can’t always wait till the men catch up with us ... but joking apart, what we can do is to ensure that equal opportunities measures are always linked with measures for combining work and family life, and at the same to encourage both men and women to take them up.” She paused briefly, and Lisa continued “That’s why I like our new ‘Part-time Work for Managers’ project so much. We encourage men to do family work, and we go direct to the women and encourage them to take on management functions. This shows women that management and the family are not mutually exclusive. And it shows men that management and part-time working are not mutually exclusive.” And Anne added to her arguments “Yes, to say nothing of the exemplary effect on men at all levels, I would say.” “Yes,” said Lisa, “and that means that part-time working is then seen differently, and is perceived as having more value. Which in turn means that it is more appealing to men. Incidentally, I stuck a bright yellow note on my Chairman’s super-flat screen just recently, saying ‘Colleagues are fathers and mothers’.” Anne laughed, and exclaimed “Good idea! Can I copy?” “Yes, of course.”

### Personal experience triggers initiatives

Following the discussion with Anne, Lisa was just beginning to think about what obstacles men set up for themselves when they want to find a way of combining work and family life, when she heard the following account:

“We have a department manager who has a woman in his department, whose child is in the company kindergarten. Whenever one of the kindergarten teachers is on holiday or ill, we ask the mothers to take turns to deputise so as to fill the gap. He always refused to let the employees in his department take on this job. Then a few weeks ago he became a father himself. So I deliberately approached him again, and asked him about it, saying ‘I know the woman is working at a machine, and the machine has to keep running, I’m well aware of that.’ And this time he answered yes, I should definitely ask him, and if the situation permits he will give his approval.” (Human resources developer)

“You see – that only goes to prove what I always say”, said Lisa, who had stopped and listened carefully. “If there were more men walking around with children in prams and pushchairs, in next to no time the kerbstones would be flattened for easy crossing of roads, and the doors of buses would be lowered for easy use of public transport.” “And there would be a few modifications of cars to fit in with what women need,” added the human resources developer. Lisa agreed: “Mostly people change their point of view very quickly once they find themselves in the same boat.”

### Exchanging money for time?

As a rule, men still earn more than women. Lisa realised that that was a major obstacle. If a man takes parental leave, that reduces the family income. “So we are exchanging money for time. Or even worse, we are exchanging money for quality of life”, as Anne once accurately put it when they were talking about the subject. And Lisa responded “the higher you rise in pay grade, the less weight that argument should have, don’t you think?” “Yes, but the argument is still there”, said Anne, sticking to her argument. “I mean the well paid men and the best paid men do not exactly make up the majority of the population. So what if the argument holds water? How do we solve that problem?” Lisa laughed, but then she became serious again. “No idea. Or maybe what we should do is to elect a woman as Chancellor – she would be aware

of all the problems and bring in legislation to compensate.” “Great idea!” said Anne, with a touch of sarcasm.

### **Negative image**

There is a very large area where men who are changing their ideas still have to battle with a negative image. “One important thing is the financial aspect – that is an argument that is bound to come up. The other is that we are in a rural community here, and if there’s a man pushing a pram through the village, people will quickly be asking whether he is out of work, or what? I think it’s easier for those living in cities.”

But the problems come from bosses, colleagues, neighbours, from men and from women. “Not just from the male colleagues!” remarked Lisa. “We women also have to be critical of ourselves. Equal opportunities start at home! So we have to stop making fun of those men.” “You’re quite right,” said Anne. “I couldn’t agree with you more.” “I haven’t finished yet”, said Anne, who sounded very determined to state her point of view. “And we have to stop giving these men so much help and support – that happens again and again. How can I put it?” Lisa was hunting for words. “A single mother is just a single mother. But a single father is a real sensation, and we women queue up to help, with all kinds of offers of assistance, do you see what I mean?” “Yes, I do. I’ve often been surprised that these men accept this kind of babying”. Anne let this idea sink in before continuing “And it seems to me that we women are reluctant to let anyone help us.”

All these ideas really came pouring out of her, but Anne felt she simply had to add another comment. “The story with the pram is nothing like so crass here in the Eastern Laender, hasn’t been for a long time. I really have to make that clear. Because we’re always described as some kind of backwoods people...”

### **Child care or career?**

“Right after the argument about loss of income, the next thing mentioned is the career kink, which quickly discourages men’s interest in parental leave,” said Lisa. “And rightly so, as we know” answered Anne. “We know that only too well, from women in particular. But let me come back to your argument, which you meant half seriously, and half jokingly. If more fathers were to opt for parental leave, the companies would very quickly adapt to their needs, you can be sure of that! As long

as they are the exceptions, there is no need to adapt. If there were more of them, that would benefit everyone – men and women, fathers and mothers and children!”

“Just a moment”, said Lisa, taking up the idea. “That idea is not a joke – it’s deadly serious. You mean that if more men were to take parental leave, the companies would dream up ideas for re-entry after parental leave, for career opportunities, and so on? But for goodness sake, why don’t they do it for women? Can anyone explain that to me?” There was silence from Anne at the other end of the line.

### **Combining work and family in the Eastern Laender**

“With you in the Eastern Laender,” reflected Lisa, when she had recovered, “the whole issue of combining work and family life looks quite different, I believe?” “Yes, that’s true. In the GDR, the proportion of women working was high, but at the same time we had an average of three children per family. With a double burden, or even a triple burden. And the main burden of family work, of caring and looking after the family, still lies with the women. Many of the institutions that helped them have disappeared, and they now have long distances to travel to work, adding further to their burdens. Just imagine you are away from home for 14 hours a day. Even shopping is a problem then!” “Okay, but individual solutions are really running up against their limits there. And even if we set up child care facilities, the problem is only half solved. 14 hours away from home! It would be much better to have the jobs locally. But I suppose I’m just talking pie in the sky. At any rate we cannot offer any solution here. All we can do is to point out the problems. We will talk to the trade unions about the problems, and together with them we can tell the politicians. And from there, we can present the problems to decision makers in business.” And once more Lisa is full of that enthusiasm which inspires everyone around her.

### **What can I do as a Works Council member?**

- Get an overview of the situation of women and men, of employees who have to care for children or relatives.
- Agree with your management on participation in award and auditing schemes for equal opportunities.
- Discuss the issue of the work/life balance at all levels.
- Check whether there are in-house regulations just waiting to be put into practice.
- When you address company measures to improve the balance between work and family life, make sure that these are attractive to both women and men with family responsibilities.
- Initiate seminars to raise awareness on equal opportunities and the work/life balance for women and men.
- Maintain contact with the company's equal opportunities officer.
- Encourage projects such as part-time working for management executives, in order to launch a change in corporate culture.
- Give signals specifically for target groups which are not yet able to stand up clearly for their rights.
- Nowadays there are a great many different projects on the work/life balance. Build on the experience gathered in your company, your networks, the trade union and the equal opportunities officer.



## 11. Not in our company!

### **Sexual harassment and mobbing.**

Anne launches a surprise campaign

Anne got home to find Frieder relaxed and in good spirits. “A good thing you’re already there,” she remarked, “I simply have to let off steam”. “Why, what’s happened?” He asked. “I’m as angry as a bear with a sore head,” she replied. “What?” He answered, “I thought you were a crafty fox?!” “You silly monkey! I simply can’t get these obscene screensavers off the PCs.” “But you’re so fantastic at fixing things, foxy! All you have to do is switch them off.” But seeing how angry she looked, he stopped and said “Sorry. It’s no joking matter, I know. I was just trying to cheer you up. Tell me all about it”.

The Works Council meeting had been rather stormy. There is no other subject that gets the male colleagues so worked up. The subject on the agenda today was a complaint by a female colleague who had been confronted with pornographic screensavers on the PCs of almost all the men in the department. When she asked them to remove the screensavers, they simply said she shouldn’t be so prudish. After long hesitation, in the end she went to her manager. But he said it was none of his business, and she should take the matter to the Works Council if it bothered her.

“Go on, tell me what happened! What did the meeting decide?” asked Frieder. “You won’t believe it,” said Anne. “I think the answer is very straightforward – first of all we have the general conditions of the plant agreement, and even more important, we have the new Act. It’s as clear as daylight, with the new EU Directive, which requires all employers to take preventive measures. There’s no doubt about it – those screensavers have to go. But that was just my idea! They were all saying things like ‘There’s no harm in it, is there?’ or ‘You can see that kind of thing on TV any day of the week.’” Anne was still furious. “I thought this time I would not be able to sort them out. But just imagine, then one of the new female colleagues stood up, and said ‘We have to produce a report in response to this complaint. What are we going to write in it? That the Works Council advises the colleague not be so prudish? You can’t be serious.’ So it all turned out well in the end. But I’m determined to do something about it. We will have to set a very clear sign.” And with that Anne closed this disagreeable subject.

*Is self-defence  
prudish?*

What happened in that case left Anne with a deep sense of dissatisfaction. For days, the colleague who had made the complaint had to put up with all kinds of stupid allusions because she had taken the matter to the Works Council. After some reflection, Anne took action.

First of all she made sure she had the support of the colleagues in the Works Council and in the plant. That involved a lot of discussion, especially with the men. But Anne and the men and women supporting her were well prepared for the arguments. There was even one colleague who accused her of “trying to intervene in the private sphere of our colleagues.” But Anne refuted this argument by explaining that “we are obliged to take preventive action, and our offices are not our private living rooms!” And finally she talked to the Plant Manager about it, knowing that he had often been annoyed by the impression the offices can give to visitors. After that she launched the big campaign.

First of all she wrote a document that she placed in the Intranet; she thought about the headline “No Nudes is Good News”, but then changed it to “Don’t be obscene – clean up your screen”, and added the subtitle “Clean screens for rail classics”.

She explained in the article that Company Management and Works Council were cooperating to make a stand against sexual harassment at the workplace. The company was therefore providing a number of copies of the annual Rail Classics Calendar, a favourite collectors’ item, with professional and aesthetically appealing photos of vintage and modern locomotives, details of the rail system, and some of the behind-the-scenes work that makes the railways tick. In return, she called for removal of all sexist calendars in all offices and workshops.

The stock of classic rail calendars was exhausted within a week. The appeal of the campaign was a surprise even to the Plant Manager, who said “I want to play my part, too – I’ll provide some more copies myself. The offices really look railway-like now, thanks to Queen Solomon the Wise!” He was obviously impressed at the rapid results of the campaign.

And then Anne launched Phase 2, again in an e-mail circular. To underscore how seriously company management was taking the campaign, she indicated that a management walkabout was planned in a week’s time to check campaign progress; that employees in the IT department were authorised to remove from PCs all screensavers and background pictures that might give offence; and that the Plant Manager himself would replace any off-colour calendars still left over.



*A Wise campaign*

Anne also pointed out that the walkabout would take place during the lunch break, so as to avoid exposing anybody. She also stressed that this time no sanctions were intended, but concluded that in future no such products would be tolerated.

As expected, the delegation found very few indecent pictures on their walkabout. People had understood the signals! In next to no time, the message got around that the management team was giving the campaign its full backing. Anne, who is known for her diplomacy and tactical skill, decided to use the momentum of the campaign and extend it to sexual harassment, a big issue at the present time. She offered workshops and discussion sessions, inviting a series of well-known speakers. At the end of her month of campaigning, she had a good set of results to show.

There is nothing wrong with a little flirting at the workplace, provided that it is voluntary on both sides – that is quite different from sexual harassment. But there is a lot wrong with groping, dirty jokes and other verbal attacks, and indecent calendars, posters and screensavers. Sexual harassment is a form of violence – mostly directed against women, and less often against men.

Sexual harassment gives rise to embarrassment, fear and shame in the victims. Often they try to suppress what they have experienced. Many women who are subjected to it believe they have to cope with it by themselves. Most of them believe to start with that they are the cause of the problem! The effects of sexual attacks are serious. The victims often suffer from physical and/or mental dysfunction, depression, loss of concentration, headaches, stomach aches or sleep disorders.

### **Sexual harassment is defined in the Protection of Employees Act, and is a criminal offence**

“Sexual harassment at the workplace is any deliberate, sexually motivated behaviour which violates the dignity of employees at the workplace. This includes:

1. Sexual actions and forms of behaviour which are punishable under criminal law; and
2. Other sexual actions and invitations to such sexually motivated physical contacts, remarks with sexual content, and the showing or visible exhibition of pornographic representations which are recognisably rejected by the person affected;
3. Sexual harassment at the workplace constitutes a breach of duties under employment contracts, or a disciplinary offence.”

Frieder found an article for Anne from the archives. "You have to read this. It's a careful study conducted in the Western Laender in 1990, with some alarming findings: 93% of all women in employment have at some time been faced with sexual harassment. 72% of the cases were described as serious. More than half of these women were exposed to indecent remarks at the workplace, one in three with bottom pinching or obscene pictures." "93%! That is incredible. I'd never have believed it." "Yes, isn't it?" replied Frieder, "and I've found something else, too. An interview which one of my colleagues unearthed. I think you had a different approach to the problem here in the East. She writes that there was sexual harassment in the former GDR, but it was not referred to in that way, and it was not discussed. And her research also showed that, both in the West and in the East, the majority of offenders have no awareness that they are doing anything wrong. Almost all of them put some of the blame on the woman, and claim that she provoked the attack. 'In most cases they deny that things happened like that, and if anything did happen it was always due to provocation. Of course.'"

*Alarming facts and figures*



Anne nodded vigorously, "Exactly. By the way, we often forget that harassment comes not only from male colleagues, or even in some cases from female colleagues; it also comes from male customers. Not from female customers, at least I've never heard of any. Of course for the railways those problems come up again and again for female employees doing conductor service on the trains." "Yes, that's a particularly sensitive area," said Frieder, seeing the point at once. "Do they get special training to deal with that?" Anne thought for a moment, and replied "Not specifically for those problems. Although that would be an idea! But," she added with a trace of pride, "the issue is a very important part of the training in 'partnership behaviour' which we hold. These training courses are even included in the Company Framework Agreement." "Really? That's remarkable. By the way," added Frieder, who had just remembered an important point, "back to the screensaver case. That was fairly simple. Screensavers are visible, and no-one can deny them. But the whole thing gets very difficult if there are no witnesses. It's still the case, isn't it, that most victims have to leave the company?" "I suppose so. People tend to believe what men say more, and there was one male colleague who told me straight out:

'Women are at a disadvantage there. If a woman comes along and says 'That guy harassed me', it's always a real problem for the employer.

*Mostly men are more credible*

Who should he believe? He wasn't there himself. That is what happens so often in our society – people inevitably tend to believe more what the man said, right from the start.”

### **What can I do as a Works Council member?**

- Address the issue of sexual harassment at the workplace.
- Try to talk to victims of harassment, and offer them support from the trade union, the Works Council, the equal opportunities officer or the trade union women's group.
- Hold discussions, workshops and seminars on the subject for male and female employees.
- Conduct a joint campaign to remove obscene posters, etc.
- Launch a PR campaign on the subject (e.g. an exhibition).
- Suggest to the employer that training sessions could be held on the subject for management staff.
- Take the right of complaint seriously. The Works Council is obliged to consider any complaints, to examine them, and to adopt a resolution on the result of discussion. If there are no witnesses to the incident, the Works Council must start from the assumption that the victim is credible.
- Make use of the participation rights and initiative rights of the Works Council, e.g. for individual human resources measures. These may range from an application for transfer to another department, to an application for dismissal. If such harassment is committed by an instructor, the Works Council can demand his/her dismissal from the function of instructor.
- Work out protection measures for women and men on doing night work.
- Make use of the right of initiative, and draw up a Company Agreement on Protection from Sexual Harassment at the Workplace.

### Mobbing

“Can you imagine that sexist images on PCs could also be used as a way of mobbing?” asked Frieder, thoughtfully.

“I’ve never thought about that before,” answered Anne. “Sexual, sexist or racist attacks can in principle be used as method of mobbing, you’re right there.” And a moment later she continued “It seems to me that employers are more willing to take action against mobbing than they are against sexual harassment. There’s no need for long discussions on that, as a Works Council Chairman from another company told me. He said ‘We do have mobbing, but that is individual employees among themselves who do the mobbing, and the boss moves in with tough measures to stop it. There have been warnings, and even dismissals, whenever he has found incidents of mobbing, or else transfer to another department. If, for example, someone was head of department and was found to be mobbing somebody, he was transferred to another department, and was no longer head of department.’”

The English expression “to mob somebody” describes ongoing systematic attacks at the workplace, aimed at wearing down the victim; it may occur among employees or by the behaviour of supervisors and employees under them. The objective is to marginalise the victim, to isolate him/her and drive him/her away from the workplace. Mobbing may be done either by men or by women, and the victims may be either men or women. Mobbing is often a matter of the atmosphere in the company. In all cases, the employers have responsibility to prevent mobbing at the workplace. There are numerous studies demonstrating the negative health impact of mobbing, ranging from physical disorders even to suicide in extreme cases.

“That is something it says in every management magazine, Anne – each of these articles gives a calculation of the losses that companies have to face due to mobbing. They hit the bosses in the only place where they can feel pain – in their pockets.”

“Frieder!” exclaimed Anne, who could not stop herself from grinning. But then she became more serious again, and said “I have a feeling that the increase in mobbing is due to the fact that the working atmosphere has become tougher.” Frieder agreed with her: “No doubt about it, increasing pressure at work creates fertile ground for mobbing!”

### **What is mobbing?**

Mobbing is clearly directed against one person, and mostly extends over a considerable period. The perpetrators and the victims work in the same company, and have some kind of relationship with one another in their work. In the long run, the victim is unable to cope with the situation and becomes physically or mentally ill.

### **Who gets mobbed?**

Statistically, every fourth person employed will be deliberate victimised at some time. More than half, that is 55% of all mobbing victims, are women. Young women are chosen particularly often as targets. Mobbing takes place at all levels of the hierarchy, from cleaning services right up to senior executives. It occurs most frequently between people at the same level of hierarchy – 44% of all victims say that they are mobbed by their own colleagues. But mobbing can also occur top down, i.e. bosses picking on the people they are responsible for, or less frequently bottom up, i.e. employees victimising their boss.

### **How is mobbing done?**

- Information that is essential for their work is withheld from victims.
- Communication is reduced to a minimum.
- People refuse to greet them.
- Suspicions are voiced that the victims are mentally ill.
- The work of the victims is denigrated.
- The victim is sexually harassed.
- The victim is worn down by overwork or under-work.
- The victim is refused any right of complaint by his/her superior.

### **What can I do as a Works Council member?**

- Try to recognise mobbing at an early stage. Take steps to prevent it in good time, within the framework of the Works Council's rights of initiative and codetermination.
- Take the rights of employees to raise complaints seriously.
- Pass on information to the employees; in many cases they are not aware of their rights under labour law (e.g. the right to inspect their personnel files, a right to a hearing and to discussion of problems, and the right to file complaints).
- Tell them about free-of-charge counselling for trade union members.
- Offer open discussions; offer discussions in the presence of external advisors (supervision, mediation).
- Organise continuing education on the issue of mobbing, for the Works Council and also for senior executives and those responsible for human resources.
- Call on management to accept its responsibility, with the aim of concluding a plant agreement making it clear that antagonistic behaviour is not worthwhile.



## 12. What companies tell us

### **Corporate culture, diversity – the variety in a company.**

Lisa and Anne discover the body language of their company

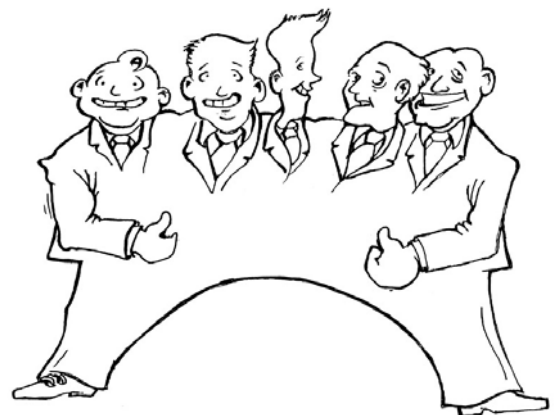
“Now listen, Mrs Pauer. You know I have a very high opinion of you. But this is going too far! Do I interfere with your work? No! You see, so let me get on with my work in peace. I know what I’m doing!”

“That means I must be exactly on the right track, if he gets so worked up, that infallible Marketing Director of ours!” thought Lisa, as she left his spruced-up, orderly office. “But I simply had to let off steam”.

What had happened? She had been browsing through a new corporate image brochure in the office of the Marketing Director’s Personal Assistant. Glossy format. Impressive photos. And she started again from the beginning. “What is it that I find so inappropriate?” she thought. “Beautiful photos, professionally done...” and then she hit on a caption under a photo: “Real men at work”. Suddenly she realised what it was. All the photos in the whole brochure were only of men. Not a single one showing a woman. Not a single photo of other nationalities, of which the company had so many. And not a single photo of the employees in administration or engineering. Lisa was not slow to speak her mind, and to tell the man responsible how annoyed she was at “this typical core workers mentality”. There was nothing in the brochure on the fact that the company now had a very respectable quota of disabled employees.

For a long time, she could not help thinking about the incident. Some time later, she had almost forgotten about it when she ran into the following comments under the heading “Corporate Culture” on the Internet:

“The corporate culture of a company comprises values, norms, rituals and forms of behaviour. These in turn are reflected in the company’s ideals, its internal and external communications, its public relations work, and in particular in the unspoken rules of the game – which are known as the ‘body language’ of a company.”



And the brochure came into her mind again, although the first thing she thought of on reading the Internet texts were “Corporate culture! Don’t

they have any real problems? As if there were not more important things to worry about.”

But her curiosity was aroused, so she logged into the chat room advertised on the website. Nickname? She thought for a moment, and entered ‘piratin’ (female form of “pirate”). She had always had a soft spot for female adventurers.



The chat room was already buzzing. The female names were PowerWoman, GreatBear, PippiLongstocking, pharaonin [pharaoh-ess], and the male names were philosopher and igletto. She watched for a while as names and sentences came up on the screen, moved upwards and disappeared again. It was a lot calmer here than in the chat rooms that Lena had showed her – the entries there often flashed past just as one-word comments or short phrases, with masses of strange abbreviations. But this chat room was a real forum for exchange of opinions.

GreatBear: Informal networks are typical of corporate culture. And mostly in our culture informal networks are male networks.

pharaonin: What does that mean?

GreatBear: The decisions are not made in official bodies, but outside of them. Everything is agreed in advance.

pharaonin: At the pub, at company sport sessions, on the golf course, on the tennis court, in nightclubs...

PippiLongstocking: Some managers in the USA hold their meetings in the kind of bars where they can be sure the women will not come.

PowerWoman: I can't believe that. I thought those times were long gone.

pharaonin: Sadly, it's true.

philosopher: And there are many groups within companies that are excluded from institutionalised information. Take the Intranet, for example – that's getting more and more important. Those who do not have a PC, like the people in production, or cleaning staff, do not have access to information.

pharaonin: Part-time workers are mostly dependent on meetings being held at a time when they are present in the company.

philosopher: Multi-language information is still the exception, even in companies with a lot of employees from abroad. That means those people are excluded from the flow of information.

But now Lisa can no longer ignore Minna, who is whining at her. Time for walkies! Lisa is immersed in her thoughts, and lets her dog lead the way through the park. “Everywhere, we women are responsible for the

atmosphere. At home and at work. We make sure everything is cosy, water the flowers, make the preparations for the office parties, clear up afterwards. Mostly it's the male colleagues that make the speeches. But we do the copying, write the minutes, do the Internet searches. And who goes out and buys the birthday presents and other gifts for the colleagues in the department?"

The next few days, Lisa talks to her colleagues and asks them how they perceive the image of the company. To her surprise, she finds that the image of the company is a matter of concern to everyone, in their own way. There is one new female colleague who tells her that she has noticed how masculine the language is. She quotes the example of how the accounts department was described to her when she had just joined the company:

"The accounts department: manpower 43, that is two men and the rest women."



*The power of language*

"Language often reflects power. Men are not keen on having the title of 'secretary'," commented one colleague. "Yes," said Lisa.

It was rather like a jigsaw puzzle – it is only when you put the individual parts together that the whole thing produces a picture. The picture of how a company presents itself to its employees, and how it is perceived, by them and by the customers. Corporate culture can exclude whole groups of people – that is something Lisa has noticed from the discussions. So she set up a project group, trying to include people from as many different backgrounds as possible. At the first meeting, the participants tried to analyse what it is that makes up corporate culture. And these were the results of the brainstorming, as recorded on the flipchart:

- Communication structures
- Information flows
- Role stereotypes (male roles / female roles)
- Use of language
- Cultural attitudes
- Corporate body language

Then a lively discussion broke out, and Lisa listened with interest. In the end she stood up, drew an arrow under the list on the flipchart, and wrote in large letters: "...exclude women".

Communication structures, so the discussion had shown, often exclude women. They are frequently located at top management level, where there are only very few women. There is important information which does not find its way into the institutionalised information channels. Men exchange ideas via tried-and-tested informal channels, making use of their efficient fraternity-like networks.

“Women are confined to certain areas by role stereotypes,” explained a young woman in the project group. “Sometimes they have influence up to a certain point... and just beyond that point is where the decision is made! The decision-making bodies are made up almost exclusively of men.”

“All the time you’re talking about men and women. But aren’t you just talking about German men and women?” asked Gülben, a young Turkish woman, finally taking courage to speak up. “Yes, your language excludes women. But our corporate culture also excludes foreigners. Our language, for all instructions, corporate rules, circulars, the employees’ magazine, etc., is exclusively German. That is our corporate culture – even the menu in the cafeteria excludes the eating habits of the foreigners employed here.”

Lisa noted on the flipchart: “People only see what they know”. It’s rather like the slogan I once saw on a fantastic poster by a travel book publisher,“ she explained, “where it said ‘you only see what you know’. That really impressed me. Seeing something with understanding is the first step to change.”

### **Taking positions**

But what, they all asked, did Lisa mean when she talked about “corporate body language” in the brainstorming session? “Corporate body language. A company gives a certain message in the way it builds its company premises. How it arranges and furnishes its offices. Is that what you mean?” asked one participant. “Yes, said Lisa. ‘Corporate body language’ is the technical term for that.” “But isn’t that rather a minor point, don’t you think?” answered the colleague in a burst of anger.

Before Lisa could answer, a man joined in the debate: “I think that’s a very interesting point. Just remember the first few weeks when you started working here. What impression did you have of the company?”

What about you, Frank?" he asked, addressing one of his colleagues personally, "just think of when we were at the new pub just recently, and after a couple of minutes you said 'Hey, this is a great atmosphere here. Really makes you feel at home'. You know, I've been in field service for years now. When I go to a customer's premises, I always pick up a whole lot of impressions. Some of them consciously, and probably even more unconsciously. There are some companies I always like to go to, because I always feel welcome there. And there are others where I leave after the meeting with a vague feeling of coldness, or the idea that I'm just a disturbing intruder. Of course, the people I talk to there play an important part in that impression. By their personal body language. If you have someone sitting in front of you for a whole hour with their arms folded and their legs crossed, you can be sure there's no chance of doing business with them."

"But surely that's a job for management – for the top people," exclaimed another colleague, joining passionately in the debate. "That's where corporate culture is made." And Lisa answered him "To a large extent, yes. But aren't we part of the corporate culture, too? We have collected a whole lot of ideas today. Each and every one of us can contribute something, and we in the Works Council can also do a great deal. By taking a stand against sexist, racist and homophobic jokes, caricatures and photos. Or by talking to those responsible for the cafeteria and getting them to produce a menu that takes account of the needs of our foreign employees – we have so many of them. And what will happen when we suddenly begin to pay attention to the holidays in other cultures?"

The evening ended with a decision by the project group to go into further depth on one of the subjects, i.e. that of networking. "We will make use of existing networks, equal opportunities committees and working groups," said one of Lisa's new colleagues in the Works Council, "to break through the communications structures and information flows that are designed for men. I would like to create a new network – an informal network for women here in the company. I can imagine a monthly women's discussion forum. What do you think of the idea?"

### Checklist for questions on corporate culture

- What are the bodies where decisions are made? Are women included in these bodies?
- What is the degree of informality?
- What is the language usage (gender-neutral / gender-sensitive)?
- Are all target groups in the company reached by circulars, notices, Intranet?
- What are the characteristics of corporate body language? Is it also appealing to women, and to ethnic and social minorities?

### Diversity / Variety in the company

#### Legal basis

Under Article 13 of the EU Treaty, it is prohibited to discriminate against employees on grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Lisa was still thinking about Gülben's proposals in the project group on her way home. A few days later, she found she was not the only one who had continued thinking. "I am a little ashamed about our blind spots", one Works Council colleague told her, as they met when making coffee next morning. "Lisa, we have to include some more points in our company statistics – not only women and men, but also foreigners, and the disabled. And then there's something else I thought about this evening. At the office party a couple of months ago, I got into conversation with one of the men in the department that I had previously only seen but never talked to. We talked about all kinds of things. And almost incidentally, he mentioned that he would like to take his friend with him to parties like this, but so far he had not dared to do so. Isn't that part of corporate culture, too?" Lisa thought for a moment and answered "Yes, it is." And then she remembered her resolution not to deal with everything herself any more, and said "Why don't you prepare something about that for our next meeting!?" Her colleague nodded. "I've already started! But Lisa," she added slowly, "we really should start with our own blind spot, right here in the Works Council. We no longer have any foreigners – neither men nor women – and none of the women from the assembly line." Lisa agreed without a word. "Come with me," her friend added, "I've hit on a very interesting book on the subject. What we are talking about now is known as

*Identifying blind spots*

Diversity Management.” When they got to her office, she showed Lisa a few pages where she had already made some notes:

“The American concept of Managing Diversity, known in German speaking countries as Diversity Management, is different in many respects from positive action for women. It considers not only women as possible victims of discrimination, but all employees not belonging to the dominant group.

A need for development is seen not only, or not mainly with respect to female employees, but also with respect to

- the organisation as a whole, because the objective of Managing Diversity is to change the organisational culture;
- the whole of corporate human resources policy; and
- the management executives, who are at present mostly men.

“Yes,” added Lisa, “we must not forget to point out the right management of diversity is an important factor in competition, particularly at senior management level, as it says here.”

In the meantime, her colleague had taken a piece of paper and written “DIVERSITY” in big letters as a title, adding

- Expands potential for creativity and innovation
- Increases problem solving capacity and productivity in the team
- Expands the basis for recruiting and promoting new people
- Enhances our competitiveness.

“That’s very good,” said Lisa. “We should keep it in mind for our daily work.” And then she had an idea: “I’m sure our graphic designer can make that into a fantastic poster. We can get it printed at the company printing shop, and put it on the notice boards, in the coffee making areas, etc.” Her colleague took up the idea with enthusiasm. “That gives us a great baseline for the campaigns that we want to launch in the near future in any case. I’m thinking of broadening the basis of our formal networks, to make sure they are really accessible to everyone. I’m thinking of training sessions to reduce prejudice, and of equal opportunities seminars. And rapid inclusion of different groups of employees in our Works Council.” Lisa was delighted at the enthusiasm of her new ally.

Lisa exchanged ideas with Anne about the “voyage of discovery” as she called it. A few days after the meeting of the project group, Lisa received an e-mail:

“A matter which has just come up – the daughter of a colleague is living with a female partner who is currently very ill. Can she get carer’s leave to look after her? This subject is still completely new to me.”

Lisa replied “for registered same-sex partnerships, there is a legal provision to take carer’s leave. but there’s a big obstacle here – the people concerned have to out themselves in the company. a difficult problem in view of the widespread prejudice that still exists against gays and lesbians. in practical terms it means they have to make a decision – either they risk exposing themselves to abuse from all sides, or else refrain from claiming what is due to them. I’m sure you will tell me it is up to us women in the works council to make things easier for them ;-))...”

Anne’s answer was short and to the point: “Of course, wise and powerful as we are?”

And a few minutes later she sent a follow-up: “And which of your new discoveries does that fit into? Managing diversity? Corporate culture? Or balancing work and family life? Thinking about that myself, I would say probably all of them, right?” “right!” replied Lisa at once. “they all belong together.”



### **13. Do the hard things while they are still easy**

#### **Works Council activities.**

Lisa's programme and Anne's plans – another meeting

"What a nuisance! Anne is preparing something, and I can't get her on the phone. And I have something I simply have to tell her," thought Lisa, with a sigh. "But at least I'll send her an e-mail".

That evening, Lisa's mobile phone rang somewhere in the flat. By the time she had found it, it had stopped ringing. She called back, and Anne said with a laugh, not even stopping to greet her friend, "I got your e-mail. Great idea! Tell me all about it." "Nora said I should take a day off work on Sunday. And to stop me from having a fit of housework, she packed Minna and me into the car, and off we went to the countryside. For a picnic." "A wonderful idea!" "Yes, I thought so too, in the end. We did some sunbathing, and Minna started chasing butterflies. Then after a while Nora asked how the new members of the Works Council were getting on. That reminded me how hard it was for me at the beginning. I was the only woman in the Works Council, and the only new member as well – quite exotic! – and I had practically no idea of the work I would have to do. But to make up for it, I was absolutely bursting with enthusiasm." And that is how Nora gave Lisa the idea of helping to familiarise the new colleagues with their job in the Works Council.

"What about you, Anne?" asked Lisa. "What kind of top secret things are you doing, with your assistant screening you off completely?"

"Secret?" laughed Anne. "Nothing secret about it! Or perhaps there is. We are preparing our Employees Meeting. You know what that means, don't you? We are going to present our 'Equal Opportunities Enterprise' and do some publicity for it." "Tell me something about it" said Lisa, encouragingly. "Sure, if you've got a couple of weeks to listen!" joked Anne, and didn't even wait for Lisa's answer before launching into her description.

"We have set up working groups in the Works Council to prepare this meeting. And we have also included the young people. There is a group for organisation – they look after the places and times, and make sure the invitations get sent out in good time, they inform company management, and look after the catering. Then we have a group that is responsible for working out the contents in detail. And we have decided to invite an expert to speak on equal opportunities – guess who?"

"Ohhh," sighed Lisa theatrically, "that's much too hard for me." "Go on," said Lisa, "just one guess!" "Not Satu, the Finn we met in Brussels?"

“Brussels, that’s a good start,” replied Anne. “You’ve got two more guesses”. Lisa thought out loud “We met a lot of people who would come into consideration. But who would you invite? No, I give up – you’ll have to tell me.” “You, of course,” exclaimed Anne. “We want to invite you! What do you think of that?” The thoughts raced through Lisa’s mind. She was delighted, and wanted to accept spontaneously, but would she be good enough? And as she paused, she heard Anne saying “Yes, you can do it – you will be great, I know you will. Please say you’ll do it.” “Yes, but...” “No buts! You’ve done so much, just think of all the things you’ve achieved in the last few months. What more could you want?” Anne was surprised at Lisa’s doubts about herself. “You’re right!” exclaimed Lisa, putting a decisive end to the discussion. “I’ll come, and I’m really looking forward to it.” “Good. I’m looking forward to it, too. And you will stay over the weekend, won’t you?” “Agreed.”

“And apart from that,” said Anne, reverting to her description of preparations, “we’re working on a little sketch where we make fun of ourselves, that is men and women at the workplace. There are lots of male and female colleagues joining in, and you can’t imagine what fun we have had preparing it. I’m already sure the meeting will be a complete success. And of course we’re making preparations for the contents, too, and who will say what and when, and what objections could be raised. I know you’ll enjoy it.”

Lisa could have talked to Anne for hours that day. But she wanted to do a bit more work on her own preparation. So she went back to her desk. Following Anne’s example, she thought about a title for the project. She sat and brooded over it. Without success.

Suddenly, she was dragged out of her state of immersion in her thoughts by Minna’s cold muzzle on her knee. Minna went back two steps, and placed a ball of paper on the floor. “Not now, Minna.” But the dog refused to give up, and kept on nudging Lisa till she stood up and bent down to pick up the ball of paper. But Minna was quicker, and took off with the paper, stopping to give Lisa a cheeky look. Lisa accepted the invitation to play. She knew she had neglected Minna recently.

The distraction was good for Lisa. In the middle of playing, she suddenly hit on the title for the meeting – “Take off!” That’s it! That’s the slogan for the meeting! A few days later, Lisa was preparing to get the new colleagues launched in the adventure of Works Council activities. The first thing was to tell the “New Members” what powers the Works

“Take off” – the  
new slogan

Council has. After all, there are plenty of them. The second block is discussion of the focal points that the Council has set itself. “Out of the female corner, into the centre of things” is its declared goal. And the real fun comes at the end: “How do we let people know our proposals and our successes?”

Everybody wanted to take some time on Friday afternoon for this subject. “No chance”, said the Deputy Chairman of the Works Council, “My girlfriend works at a Call Center, and I had to promise faithfully that I would look after the kids.” Lisa looked at him in silence. And at last she said “You’re in the best of company. All the women and men who have joined us as new members are mothers and fathers.” “Why, so they are. I never thought of it that way.” “Have you got a suggestion on how to solve the problem.” And he asked cautiously “Well, maybe the Works Council has some money for child care?” “Good idea,” said Lisa. “Can you see to it?” And the colleague agreed, hesitatingly, “If you think so.”

### Concrete implementation in the work of the Works Council

Lisa made sure that she was the moderator for the afternoon. After all, the meeting was her idea. She had sown the seeds, and now she wanted to gather the fruits. Together, they collected the most important points on flipcharts, which Lisa then carefully entered in charts for presentation:

- Define focal areas of work
- Disseminate information
- Educational work
- Works meeting
- Invoke legal requirements
- Set up equal opportunities programmes and/or company agreements
- Organise small and large successes ourselves (and celebrate them, and talk about them!)



### Defining focal areas

The first thing to do, as agreed in the unanimous decision, was for the Works Council to call for a comprehensive report by the employer on the current status of equal opportunities in the company, and also on

the issue of balance between work and family life. This was to give detailed personnel data with information on men/women, mothers and fathers, and further detailed personnel data wherever necessary, so that in future the Works Council could analyse all the measures planned by the employer or proposed by itself.

#### **Examples of focal areas:**

- Increase the proportion of women in general, or in a specified area
- Increase the proportion of women in management
- Increase the proportion of women among trainees
- Increase the proportion of men in those areas where they are currently under-represented
- Increase the proportion of men in part-time employment
- Increase the part-time and re-entry quota during/after parental leave
- Offer training programmes for employees on parental leave, or other groups

#### **How to develop focal areas:**

- Divide areas of action into individual fields, for example recruitment; vocational training and continuing education; promotion opportunities; anti-women atmosphere; pay. These areas are then to be examined by the Works Council to set focal areas for action.
- Give a weighting to each of the problems. Which can and should be tackled first, and which later? And don't forget to pay attention to your own activities there – make sure the successes are noticed! This is important, to enhance the position of yourself and the work you are doing.
- Draw up a timetable and set goals to be achieved within a certain timeframe.
- Always consider who can help you in achieving your goals.
- Check maintenance of the timetable. What have you achieved? What have you not achieved? Why not? Do you have to develop a new strategy? Enjoy the successes you have achieved.

This chart concludes with a saying by Lao-Tzu: "Do the hard things while they are still easy."

## **Disseminate information**

“Information creates trust” wrote Lisa, briefly summing up the general view in one simple sentence – in other words, much importance must be attached to disseminating information. Everyone agreed that personal discussions took priority over other methods.

### **E-mail, Intranet**

If all employees have access to PCs, electronic mail is the fastest and least expensive way to communicate with them. The Intranet is an in-house electronic information network, and will no doubt be the most important method in future for the provision of information to the employees. The Intranet gives many further possibilities for the employees and the Works Council that involve very little cost. For example the establishment of discussion forums, or a forum where improvement suggestions can be submitted.

### **Handbills, posters**

Posters cannot convey as much content as handbills. The purpose of a poster is to announce demands and positions in headline form, for immediate impact. Wit and humour are useful for posters, even more than for handbills.

### **Company magazine**

A company magazine can be used to describe activities and goals more comprehensively, and with more background information. Some company magazines have a special page for women. But it has proven even more effective to take account of the interests of women in all articles. And in all articles also to consider the impact on men and fathers, too!

### **Notice board**

Many companies also make extensive use of notice boards, which are an important and easily accessible way of providing information.

### **The good ideas**

There are many good ideas that come from the members of the Works Council or from the employees, and they are often the most effective because these are the people that know the situation extremely well, and therefore also have the best access to it. And the things that are most closely associated with their everyday experience in the company are what arouse the strongest feelings.

## **Knowledge and education**

Information is a perishable commodity. It goes out of date as fast as a daily newspaper. Whereas knowledge is something more permanent. There is a lot of truth in the saying that 'knowledge is power'. Knowledge can help people to safeguard their position in the company and also in the Works Council. Lisa's colleagues identified a lot of methods of acquiring knowledge in the course of a brainstorming session:

### **Set up an equal opportunities committee**

According to the German Works Constitution Act, in companies with 101 or more employees, the Works Council can set up its own equal opportunities committee, or a joint equal opportunities or equal treatment committee together with the employer, with the mandate to work out proposals for concrete measures to enhance equal opportunities.

### **Involve a company information provider**

According to German law also at the proposal of the Works Council, the employer is obliged to delegate an employee with knowledge of the matter, as an information provider. This enables the Works Council to make better use of the internal expertise of the employees and thus also the trade union shop stewards, and to involve them in the search for problem solutions.

### **Mandating external experts**

If the appropriate expertise is not available in the company itself, the Works Council can call on the knowledge of external experts. The primary source to be considered there is the expertise of trade union secretaries. Equal opportunities officers come into consideration here, as do equal opportunities delegates of the local labour offices, or other experts on the subject.

### **(Women's) study circles, regular group meetings**

The value of a study circle depends on the experience of the participants. They choose the subjects, e.g. discrimination at the workplace, and they determine the contents and procedure. They can invite experts to talk about specific issues, and they can maintain contact with trade union groups and women's groups. But it is the participants themselves who will provide most of the inputs, in the form of their own experience. It is particularly interesting if men also hold

discussion groups, and the women's and men's groups then get together for an exchange of views with the guidance of a professional moderator.

### **Employees' Meeting, Youth and Trainees' Meeting**

Entitlement to hold Employees' Meetings is a right gained by the efforts of the trade unions. The Works Constitution Act provides for one Employees' Meeting per calendar quarter, normally to be held during working time. The Employees' Meeting is the only institution for communicating with the whole of the company's workforce on the concerns of employees, in order to present to them the activities of the Works Council and to jointly define new contents and keynote activities. Employees' Meetings are not least an effective means of mobilising all forces. That in turn strengthens the position of the Works Council in negotiations with company management. Similar remarks apply to the Youth and Trainees Meeting.

### **Checklist for preparation of a meeting**

- When and where is the Employees' Meeting to take place?
- What is on the agenda?
- Invitations: to all colleagues, trade union, and employer.
- What should the Works Council report contain? Which points should be discussed?
- What is the positioning of the report of the employer on the status of equal opportunities for women and men in the company and integration of foreign workers employed in the company? Under the terms of the new Works Constitution Act, a report on these issues has to be given at least once a year.
- Individual campaigns: What are we doing in this area? Who is to take on what role?
- Prepare statements and questions – it is best to do so together with the employees and union shop stewards.
- Prepare and distribute an information sheet, briefly describing the subjects to be dealt with.

### **Take stock of what happened at the meeting**

- What happened at the meeting?
- How can we improve things next time? If anything went wrong: make a note of whatever can be improved, and consider the rest as history.
- Is there anything that has not been considered so far?
- What issues should be addressed again at the next Employees' Meeting?
- The most important item on the agenda: be happy about everything that went well!

### **Equal treatment in the Works Council**

“As I always say, ‘equal treatment begins at home’”, thinks Lisa, “and that includes the Works Council.” Lisa has experienced all this herself – the ‘acceptance risk’ of whether she will be recognised in the Works Council and really involved in its activities. In the course of time, she has met with some very positive examples:

“The colleague that I work with in our Works Council is responsible for a big plant in Hamburg, with some 750 employees, of whom about 600 are men and 150 women. She has a very, very high level of acceptance there. And why is that? Because she is so committed and dynamic. (...) She comes up with so many activities and ideas. She organises many things which are different from what one is normally used to.”  
(Works Council Chairman, Rail)

It is still a fact that women have to show an unusually high degree of commitment before they will get acceptance. And Lisa has firmly resolved to make sure that women are not steered only into those areas which are minor issues in the Works Council. But that women should also be involved in areas that are associated with image and prestige, and that men should also deal with some of the less attractive issues.

Young women enter the world of work with much more self-assurance today than did the generation of their mothers. Young women feel that they are emancipated. That means it may be more difficult to gain their enthusiasm for issues of equal rights, and to get their active cooperation on these issues in the Works Council. At the same time, they participate with enormous commitment in Youth and Trainee representation. So it will be worthwhile to contact young women specifically and personally in order to get them involved.



### **The European Works Council**

After many years of struggle, the trade unions in Europe have succeeded in establishing a legal entitlement to cross-border representation of the interests of employees in multinational companies. This new body is the European Works Council. There are now more than 700 European Works Councils throughout Europe. The European Works Council Directive 94/95 contains a legal entitlement to

- Annual internal meetings of employee representatives from countries of the EU and the European Economic Area, at the expense of the company group to which they belong
- At least once-a-year right to information and consultation in a meeting on cross-border matters, for example planned capital expenditure or relocation of production plants by the head office
- In the event of extraordinary events (closures, mass dismissals) the European Works Council can hold special meetings and avail itself of its right to make a statement.

The European Works Council Act of the Federal Republic of Germany additionally stipulates that women and men are to be appointed in proportion to their numbers in the company's workforce.

Some European Works Councils have taken up the issue of equal opportunities for men and women in their practical work.

### **What can I do as a Works Council member?**

- Discuss the traditional role allocation of men and women together with colleagues in the Works Council. For example, female members of the Works Council are automatically assigned by their male colleagues to auxiliary, assisting or supporting activities, and very often they themselves see that as their main function.
- Exert pressure for women to become Chairpersons of Works Councils, and to get release from their company duties to the extent necessary for the proper performance of their functions.
- Contact the company's equal opportunities officer.
- Establish key activities in the work by and for women. Set clear goals. Stop regarding yourself as a "maid-of-all-work". That only means you have to spend an enormous amount of time and energy on these things without being able to see any results, or celebrate successes at the end of the day.
- Establish a focus of activities in work with new members. Motivate other colleagues to join in Works Council activities, and help to make it easier for them to start there. Build up a supporting network for them in the company.
- Cultivate contact with the female Works Council members in other companies.
- Maintain contact with the trade unions responsible for your company. Ask for support by the trade union.
- Make use of the trade union infrastructure. Attend meetings of the Women's Committee. Maintain contact with the trade union secretaries.
- Get the representatives for youth and trainees actively involved in your work. They are a strong potential for you and your work.
- Work together with the trade union shop stewards.
- Work together with the representatives of the disabled.
- Attend trade union seminars on specific subjects and on women's issues. Incidentally, you will find people are open to your ideas and requests in all the trade unions.
- Make use of the educational leave opportunities established in the Works Constitution Act, under collective bargaining agreements and others ...
- And, the most important thing of all, to take the initiative.

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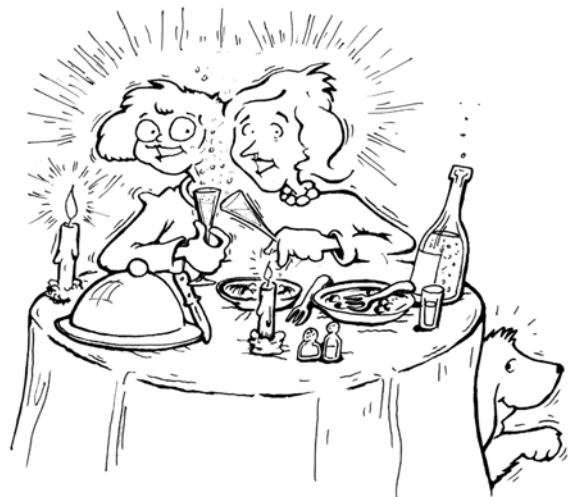
The weeks passed. Lisa prepared her presentation very carefully. At last the time came. Anne insisted on collecting Lisa personally at the station. "But you must be under a lot of stress shortly before the Employees' Meeting", said Lisa, thoughtfully. Anne smiled and shook her head, saying "Don't worry, it's all running very smoothly without me."

And Anne's expectations were fulfilled – it was a complete success! Everything was well organised. The speakers were brief and to the point, conveying their messages in clear pictures. And yet none of the important aspects were missing. The sketches presented by the colleagues at the end of the meeting were received with standing ovations.

For the weekend with Anne, Lisa had only one request, but that was a very specific one – she wanted to have dinner at a restaurant by lake Wannsee in the evening. "Why do you wanna see Wannsee?" asked Anne. "Why not? I simply imagine it must be very beautiful there", replied Lisa. Anne looked at her carefully, and said "I don't believe you! You're hiding something from me, aren't you?" But Lisa said nothing, and kept a poker face.

Lisa ordered sparkling wine for both of them as an aperitif. Anne leant back in her chair in anticipation of something special. "After all the work I have done in the last few months, and all the things I have experienced, I have decided..." and Lisa now continued slowly, "that next spring I'm going to stand for election as Chairperson of our Works Council, to take over from my Chairman who is retiring then. I have already secured the support of the Council members. And in a couple of years I want to stand for election to the General Works Council. My chances of election are not bad!" Anne understood at once how revolutionary all this was going to sound in Lisa's company.

"You have all my respect!" she said, and gave her friend a big hug. And then she took Lisa by the shoulders and shook her. "But how did you manage to keep that to yourself for so long?" Lisa laughed. "Oh, I was very tempted to tell. Shortly before the evening when you invited me here, I was sometimes just on the point of telling you. But then I knew I would soon have the



opportunity of telling you in person. And that's really nice, because you played a big part in my decision."

In the coming years, Lisa and Anne will look back often and with great pleasure at that relaxed summer evening on the terrace of the lakeside restaurant.

## Appendix

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