



Positions on a choice of career and study path free from gender stereotypes

(as of: 18/02/2022)

Gender stereotypes are firmly anchored in society and begin to shape separate notions of “femininity” and “masculinity” from early childhood. They can have a strong influence on the career choices made by young people and society in general. These gender stereotypes must be taken into account in order to enable a stereotype-free career and study selection process.

The positions presented below show how the prerequisites for a stereotype-free career and study selection process can be achieved. They are targeted towards all those involved in the career and study selection process, in particular the institutions where a large part of the socialisation, and consequently career choice preparation, takes place for children and young people. The economy also plays an important role in actively supporting a stereotype-free career and study selection process.

I. Field of action and political mandate

The training and labour markets in Germany are still divided according to gender.¹ This can lead to disadvantages on a structural, economic and individual level. The division of occupations by gender can only be stopped if young people are able to broaden their career choices, promote individual skills and bring these to the labour market, regardless of gender. Equal opportunities must be promoted in all career fields, in training (dual and full-time schooling) and study programmes.

- The coalition for the 18th legislative period calls for gender-equal career and study options for young people. In terms of equality policy, this means overcoming the segregation of the training and labour markets according to gender against the background of Article 3 (2) of the Basic Law.
- The first Gender Equality Report (2011) highlighted the importance of career selection for people's lives and careers, and identified a need for action, particularly when it comes to closing the pay gap, which is closely linked to gender stereotyped career and study choices. Paragraph 1 of the second and third book of the Social Code states gender equality as a universal principle. Gender equality measures are intended to improve the professional situation of women by working towards eliminating current disadvantages and overcoming gender stereotypes in education and the labour market.
- The report by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2013) and the annual training report by DGB Youth both point to structural disadvantages within the training systems which can negatively impact women in particular.

¹ Klischeefrei initiative fact sheets, sources: Federal Statistical Office



This is why career and study orientation - both inside and outside of school - as well as institutional career and study guidance are of great importance. The National Report of Education² and the Annual Report on Vocational Education and Training³ have both proven that career and study options are still predominately dictated by traditional role models. This indicates that the instruments currently in place are not effective enough and need to be further developed. At the same time, additional measures should be designed to ensure that young people engage in careers and study subjects regardless of gender stereotypes.

II. Individual, economic and social benefits

In the context of career and study options, equal opportunity means providing all people with the possibility to enjoy equal opportunities in the training and labour markets.

Stereotype-free career and study options support the self-determined development of personalities and help to shape lives. An education, degree or career according to individual ability and inclination is part of an independent, conscious and stable identity development. The ability to achieve one's professional potential is a key aspect of personal satisfaction and quality of life. Life and career planning are indisputably closely linked.

A competitive economy relies on young people achieving their potential and opportunities in the best possible way whilst also taking into account their life plans. This exploits macroeconomic growth and makes an important contribution towards securing the demand for skilled labour. Tailored career and study preparation also helps save costs by lowering the amount of students dropping out of their education and studies by enabling them to follow gender-independent career and study paths. Furthermore, stereotype-free career and study options enable people to secure their livelihoods throughout their lives. This is a prerequisite for individual participation and also simultaneously provides relief for the social security system. With the high gender pay and pension gap in Germany taken into consideration, it's key to address the financial aspects of career choices with a view to securing independent livelihood. Traditional role clichés that entail unequal distribution of paid and unpaid work must also be put under scrutiny.⁴

III. Objectives and recommendations

Stereotype-free career and study options pursue the following goals:

- Expanding the range of career and study options regardless of gender attributes,
- Supporting career and study options based on individual strengths and interests,
- Equal opportunities for entry-level careers,

² Authoring Group Educational Reporting (2018): Education in Germany 2018. An indicator-based report with an analysis on the effects and returns of education, p.150, 157

³ Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Ed.) (2019): Report on Vocational Education and Training 2019, p. 15

⁴ DIW Weekly Report 43/2017 on the gender pay gap; DIW Weekly Report 5/2017 on the gender pension gap

- Identifying ways in which career goals can be achieved in the long term,
- Providing information on the perspectives from occupations and sectors, in particular perspectives on working hours, the balance between work and home life, earning possibilities, career options and future options,
- Considering the importance of gender, different life situations and individual interests as a universal principle, e.g. in the planning, implementation and evaluation of vocational orientation events, counselling and company job vacancies, without further consolidating gender stereotypes.

In order to achieve stereotype-free career and study options, action must be taken in the following three areas in particular:

1. Strengthening the gender expertise of those involved in the career and study selection process

Those who aid in the career and study selection process must be able to plan and hold career-oriented events and counselling for young people, teachers, parents and employers in a gender-sensitive manner. Gender sensitivity should be recognised as an important characteristic of professional actions during the career selection process, and consequently internalised and incorporated into everyday life.

Experts and managers who are entrusted with the implementation of stereotype-free career and study options must be able to;

- recognise and question the reasons for a small range of career options due to a lack of information, orientation towards traditional gender stereotypes and societal conditions and know how to counter this,
- reflect on and scrutinise their own gender stereotypes,
- motivate young people to deal with a diverse range of career options that correspond to their own potential or abilities that can be learned, and also to consider career options that have thus far gone unnoticed and/or are not typically explored by their own gender,
- encourage and enable parents and others involved in the career selection process to accept and support stereotype-free career aspirations,
- develop realistic and varied visions for the future with young people, taking into account long-term goals and the interplay of the various areas of life.

Actions recommended by the initiative

- The preparation of gender-relevant information on career and study options and making this available to various target groups for career and study option guidance.

- The implementation of internal organisational guidelines for stereotype-free career and study options.
- Implementing gender-sensitive qualification measures to aid people during the career and study selection process.

2. Gender-sensitive design of instruments, materials and media

The instruments, materials and media used for career guidance must consistently take gender aspects into account and be designed without stereotypes.

It's therefore necessary;

- to design gender-neutral procedures that measure interests and potential as key entry instruments for individual promotion and the career and study selection process, for example,
- to provide young people with opportunities to try out a wide range of activities in order to experience their skills and interests independently of traditional gender roles,
- to implement corporate schemes for career orientation without gender stereotypes,
- to use stereotype-free information media (internet portals, print media, etc.) during the career and study orientation process,
- to select role models and contact persons for instruments, materials and media in such a way that they offer a variety of opportunities for identification,
- to use action guidelines, quality seals, etc. formulated in accordance with the principles of gender freedom and equal opportunities during the career orientation process.

Actions recommended by the initiative

- Further development instructions, documents, materials and media, including a stereotype-free presentation of careers through imagery and language.
- Making examples of successful practice prominently accessible and rewarding them with the appropriately developed quality seals.

3. Setting the socio-political course

The sustainability of stereotype-free career and study options presupposes a variety of socio-political framework conditions, such as, amongst other things:

- activities to minimise gender stereotypes in society, starting in the early developmental phase of children i.e. in pre-school education and leisure facilities,
- a coherent, life-phase orientated family, personnel and education policy,
- conditions to ensure long-term employment and the independent livelihood of people, regardless of traditional gender role patterns, in particular regarding the balance between work and home life,

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- working towards gender-independent social recognition and career remuneration,
- concepts for the transition from school to vocational training which ensure internal and external professional vocation orientation schemes for each school and ensure schemes for continuous, stereotype-free counselling and support for young people and their carers,
- an open and potential-orientated attitude from employers,
- research and testing of approaches that will lead to career and study options that are oriented towards equal opportunities.

Actions recommended by the initiative

- Including the promotion of individual potential in the political discourse surrounding career and study options and in the design of policies.
- Promoting research to uncover the causes and conditions of gender-selective life cycle planning and using this as a basis for providing options for stereotype-free counselling.
- Gender competence should become a key qualification and universal guiding principle as part of teaching training and in the educational process of all experts involved in the career and study selection process.
- To make equality policy objectives the universal principle of counselling and to offer support to counsellors.

Note on the stereotype-free use of language

The Klischeefrei initiative is committed to equal rights and diversity in the workplace and society. We aim to address all people equally on the website and in Klischeefrei publications. In many cases, there are only two-gender forms available for background information and forms of expression to describe structural inequalities in the education and labour markets. We use these two-gender forms to highlight inequalities that are significant due to gender-specific attributes in relation to “masculinity” and “femininity”, amongst other things, knowing that behind these attributes there is also a wide range of diverse gender identities and genders. We use gender-neutral language wherever possible.