



Increasing women's share in economic leading and management positions

Starting point: objectives and activities

The objective of this subproject is to present companies that apply measures to promote gender equality in management positions as role models. Additionally, a **practice-oriented dialogue** will be implemented, in order to share examples and experiences between companies, social partners and relevant stakeholders.

The first project phase focused on existing **approaches and measures** in Austrian companies to raise the proportion of women in leading positions. To this end, a total of **15 companies that are active or interested in gender equality issues** were investigated with qualitative research methods including interviews, focus groups and document analyses. The selected companies include national and international large companies as well as small and medium-sized enterprises in Vienna, Lower Austria, Upper Austria and Tyrol in various sectors (i.a. trade, construction, pharmaceuticals, research & development, industry, finance, health).

The collection, presentation and dissemination of **good practice examples** based on social science research activities makes experiences accessible. Successful ideas and models are spread and mistakes are prevented from being repeated. Corporate examples show how other businesses successfully started, argued for and sustainably implemented equality measures. Good practice examples, however, always depend on the **context**, i.e. on size, structure, history and culture of the company.

First results: measures for increasing women's share in management

The studied companies **address different areas** in their attempts to increase women's share in management positions: e.g., working hours, recruiting, human resources development or the reconciliation of work and family life.

The widespread norm that leadership positions require **full-time work with overtime** has disadvantages for persons with care responsibilities for children or other relatives, or for persons who are not able or willing to work 40 and more weekly hours in gainful employment. Therefore, some enterprises set impulses for changing **working time and company cultures**: leadership in part-time and shared leadership positions, flexible working time and home office arrangements or models of trust-based working time are cases in point.

In large international corporations, the **willingness to travel and work abroad** is an essential requirement for executive managers, ranging from short-term business trips and project-related work for some months up to assignments of several years. Barriers for employees with less mobility are cushioned by avoiding or reducing long-term mobility, enhanced use of electronic communication tools, support packages for employees who have to move and alternative career options.

Processes of **staff search and selection** are another central aspect of creating equal treatment in companies and at management level. **Recruitment of female managers** already begins when female employees and potential young executives are hired and trained systematically. In this area, the participating companies follow two approaches: Either, they take a closer look at systematic discrimination of women in the recruiting process and eliminate it, or they specifically hire women.

Corporate human resources development plays an important part in training and preparing the next generation of executives. Multi-stage, systematic HR development is offered mainly in large companies. Measures in SMEs include i.a. workshops and awareness raising. Successful HR development involves the **management level** – not only to counteract ambivalences and irritations caused by measures promoting equal opportunities. The executives' commitment to equality targets is an essential pillar in monitoring, implementing and sustaining these objectives.

Permeable and life phase sensitive career tracks in companies shape career opportunities for employees and contribute – also – to an increase of women's proportion in management positions.

Outlook: publications, networking, dialogue

The second stage of the project focuses on the dissemination and extension of the collected experiences and measures. In a series of events and at a web platform, short- and long-term ways of networking between companies, experts and stakeholders will be facilitated.

Women are top! To the top by innovative corporate cultures.

Between September 2013 and May 2015, the department IV/6 of the Federal Ministry for Education and Women is coordinating the PROGRESS project “Women are top! To the top by innovative corporate cultures“. Project partners are the **Working Life Research Centre FORBA** with the subproject **Increasing women's share in economic leading and management positions** and the **Institute for Gender and Diversity in Organizations at the Vienna University of Business and Economics** with the subproject **Increasing women's share in company boards**.

Further information at: <https://www.bmbf.gv.at/enfr/women/employment/top.html>

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