



## ■ What is gender competence?

Political and organisational action is never gender-neutral. It affects women and men in the most diverse living circumstances and can have negative effects on both gender groups. Gender competence is therefore considered to be a key qualification for job-related as well as political equality of the genders and represents an essential prerequisite for the successful implementation and realisation of gender-related equality strategies.

The attitudes and the behaviour of women and men are linked to social stipulations in the daily routine of private, career and work life. Consequently, a diversity of concepts of life and living circumstances exist (gender diversity). Gender roles are socially and culturally constructed and (re)produced on a day-to-day basis („doing gender“). Organisations are also shaped by gender roles (images) and the social attributions and gender relations involved, and correspondingly develop ingrained and to some extent also discriminatory structures.

Gender competence is the knowledge and the ability to recognise this and to deal with it ensuring that discriminatory structures are changed and new and diverse development opportunities are opened to all genders.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, gender competence includes knowledge about gender policies and gender-political strategies, about the tools and use of gender mainstreaming as well as the understanding of gender as a social category, as an analysis category and as a call to action for all the employees of an organisation.

There are different ways of developing or having gender competence conveyed. Two of these possibilities are the subject matter of the present publication: gender counselling and gender training.

The following fields of competence are differentiated in particular in view of the working environment, i.e. organisations or corporations:

- ▶ **Expert competence:** knowledge and skills that enable the fulfilment of professional activities. This includes knowledge regarding the processes and decision-making possibilities within an organisation. Expert competence displays itself in the ability to classify, reassociate and evaluate knowledge. It manifests itself in how employees

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Metz-Göckel/Roloff 2005, cf. also publications of the GenderKompetenzZentrums, for example [www.genderkompetenz.info/genderkompetenz/](http://www.genderkompetenz.info/genderkompetenz/)



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recognise, analyse and develop solutions for problems, for example gender-differentiated solutions based on previous gender analysis.

- ▶ **Method competence:** the ability to autonomously and flexibly acquire new expert knowledge or new job methods. It manifests itself when dealing with complex new knowledge, for example gender-related and -differentiated expert knowledge.
- ▶ **Social competence:** the ability to secure constructive working conditions to realise common objectives. High social competence features are for example raising problems and conflicts, talking about one's own feelings, active listening or being on respectful terms despite different approaches, for example respect of gender diversity.
- ▶ **Expert competence:** knowledge and skills that enable the fulfilment of professional activities. This includes knowledge regarding the processes and decision-making possibilities within an organisation. Expert competence displays itself in the ability to classify, reassociate and evaluate knowledge. It manifests itself in how employees recognise, analyse and develop solutions for problems, for example gender-differentiated solutions based on previous gender analysis.

Gender competence demands for one thing the ability to link acquired gender-differentiated expert knowledge with job-specific expert knowledge (expert competence), for another thing the ability to use the diverse gender-analyses in one's own specialist field (method competence). In addition, it links itself to the social competence in the constructive formation of gender relations in the organisation. It manifests itself in the ability to reflect personal gender roles and the gender roles (-images) within the organisation as well as the assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses.



**Demands on gender competence**

- ▶ Ability to reflect, with reference to one's own gender (-role) identities
- ▶ Ability to reflect, with reference to social gender roles (images), (gender as a social category)
- ▶ Knowledge about the creation of gender roles (images) and their differentiations– HR-related gender competence
- ▶ Awareness of gender roles in their socio-cultural environment (gender as a social category, gender diversity) – HR-related gender competence
- ▶ Knowledge about the complex structures of gender relations in society, politics, administration and organisation – structural gender competence
- ▶ Acknowledgement of different framework conditions and prerequisites of the ways and realities of life, in which men and women live in their diversity and complexity
- ▶ Ability to change perspectives
- ▶ Ability to tangible application of gender at work – transfer-ability