Drive the Change – For Men and Women
Our initiative

‘Chefsache. Drive the Change – For Men and Women’ is a network advocating equal opportunities for men and women in top management positions. Business executives and management boards as well as leaders from scientific institutions, academia, social services, and the public sector are the driving force behind our initiative.

Founded in 2015, the initiative hopes to trigger a revolution within the working world because there are still too few women in top positions in Germany. Gender balance and up-to-date role models benefit everyone involved – women, men, and society as a whole.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel is the official sponsor of the Chefsache initiative.

“We have passed a law governing the share of women on our major corporate supervisory boards. But even the best law will only be fully effective when it is supported by a commitment throughout society. ‘Chefsache. Drive the Change – For Men and Women’ represents this vital commitment. And therefore, I am delighted to be the initiative’s sponsor.”
“Creating equal opportunities for men and women also has a lot to do with inclusion – which is our core topic. We want a natural interaction in our society. Differences shall be accepted and diversity perceived as enriching. This is what our organization stands for. This is what we live within our company culture.”

Ana-Cristina Grohnert
Management Board Member of Allianz Deutschland AG

“Diversity and inclusion are a basic premise for any organization’s capacity to innovate and act. They are never a project or a program but a continuous process. They constitute of a new way of thinking.”

Dr. Hartmut Klusik
Board Member for Human Resources

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Armin von Buttlar
Managing Board

“The better balance of men and women in management is simply good for business: to sustain our innovative advantage and to reflect changes in talent pools and customer expectations.”

Dr. Christian P. Illek
Board Member for Human Resources

“In the future, we will be more dependent than ever before on making sure we have the most possible diversity within our teams: we achieve better results when differing ideas, perspectives, and approaches are exposed to one another. Constant change has become characteristic of our working lives, and so we have to be open to what’s new. The Chefsache initiative aims to promote these new ways of thinking and doing.”

Dr. Bettina Volkens
Member of the Executive Board, Chief Officer Corporate Human Resources and Legal Affairs

“For us, diversity means great variety, inventiveness, internationality, and different perspectives. We want mixed teams on every level and thus women on every management level.”

Prelate Dr. Peter Neher
President

“About 80% of our Caritas staff is female, but barely a quarter of our top leaders are women. This we want to change. We need to showcase women’s talents. At Caritas, we actively pursue this goal and support the Chefsache initiative. Because gender equality is important – both for men and women.”

Dr. Ursula von der Leyen
German Minister of Defence

“What holds true for society also holds true for our armed forces: diverse challenges require diverse capabilities and diverse minds that can play in any key. That’s why every man and every woman counts. If we want to go for 100%, we must not lose sight of 50% of our talent pool.”

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“Integrating diversity, promoting and enhancing cooperation amongst our staff members has been an issue for a long time and we want to make sure that these things become normalcy for all of us.”

Dr. Bernhard Beck
Chief Personnel Officer

“Innovative thinking is only possible if it takes different perspectives into account. To successfully implement the digital transformation, Germany is completely dependent on diversity and more women. Therefore, we support and promote this initiative.”

Gisbert Rühl
Chairman of the Management Board

“Exceptional fundamental research calls for top labs and equipment. But that’s not all it takes. For these labs to produce excellent research, they need to offer equal opportunities to the best people – women and men. Equality of opportunity is a key factor impacting global competition in the world of science; plus, it is essential to our capacity for innovation and performance at the Max Planck Society.”

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Angela D. Friederici
Vice President

“We firmly believe in the power of diversity, which is one of the keys to our business success. This is why we promote a transparent performance culture in which all employees have equal opportunities.”

Ute Wolf
Member of the Executive Board

“We have set ourselves the goal of increasing the numbers of women in management positions. This is why we encourage talented employees with a tailored programme. Diversity means a whole lot more to us though: heterogeneous, intercultural teams made up of women and men of different ages are what give our company the edge.”

Uwe Tigges
CEO

“We are engaged in a variety of activities to address the different aspects of diversity and inclusion. For this reason, we are delighted to also be able to drive the topic of equal opportunities for women and men as part of the Chefsache initiative.”

Philipp Justus
Managing Director Google Germany GmbH und VP CE

“Companies need to emphasize the importance of diversity in order to be innovative and remain successful. It is up to us and our daily behavior to set a positive example and anchor a diverse approach in the very culture of our businesses. We confidently say YES to women in leadership positions and to diverse teams in general.”

Norbert Janzen
Director of Human Resources – IBM Germany, Austria, Switzerland (DACH)

“Our members

EnBW

Fraunhofer

Google

IBM

LBBW

innogy

klöckner & co

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Volkswagen stands for diversity, open-mindedness, and tolerance; we are international. At Volkswagen in Wolfsburg alone, men and women from more than 100 nations work well together. We firmly believe that when people of all ages, genders, levels of experience, and nationalities work side by side, it leads to the best results.

Gunnar Kilian
Member of the Board
Human Resources
and Organization

“Mixed teams are far more creative and deliver higher performance. So, it should be a matter of course for any company to have as many women as men in leadership positions, unless they are willing to reject valuable talent. That is why we have many smart men AND women in the top tier and we provide them an environment in which they can bring the demands of career and family into harmony.”

Dr. Rainer Esser
Managing Director
ZEIT Verlagsgruppe

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Gunnar Kilian
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“Diversity in programs and the workforce pays off because mixed teams are more successful. This has helped us steadily increase the share of women in leadership positions in the past few years. Our goal is 50% women on every hierarchy level. To achieve this, we plan to launch comprehensive measures, establish a motivational corporate culture, and promote these to the general public. That’s why I’ve made this a ‘Chefsache,’ putting it on the agenda for top management.”

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Christoph Kübel
Managing Director and Labour Director

“I am convinced that it takes a holistic approach to systematically promote women in the business world. We have a long and probably difficult way to go before all participants demonstrate the recognition and willingness it takes.”

Angelique Renkhoff-Mücke
CEO

“Germany needs more female bosses. That is why Bosch joined Chefsache to help drive societal change.”

Christoph Kübel
Managing Director and Labour Director

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The name says it all

For the initiative’s executive members, establishing a level playing field for men and women in top management positions is a personal priority. Chefsache sets out to raise awareness for the perceptual stereotypes still deeply rooted in the communication and decision processes of business and society, inhibiting the advancement of women into top management positions. The initiative’s name “Chefsache” – a matter for the boss – should also be understood as a call to action specifically addressing men, who still hold the vast majority of leadership functions. That is why the Chefsache initiative addresses them too, just as much as women. Gender balance in leadership positions is a win-win for all concerned.

Aspiration

The Chefsache initiative advocates gender balance in leadership positions. Germany cannot afford to exclude well-trained talents from achieving success. Only if every person – man or woman – has the opportunity to take responsibility commensurate with their strengths, will we as a society make the most of our resources and our potential for new ideas. A performance culture accessible to all is not just a question of equality – it directly pays economic dividends.

Consequently, the Chefsache initiative aims to trigger fundamental change in the working world and to establish a new culture of respect in companies and institutions, i.e., a culture that accepts diverse professional backgrounds and abandones outdated mentalities in recruitment decisions, particularly in regards to leadership and multiplier roles.

Statistics show that there are conspicuously few women in top management positions in Germany. Among the executive boards of the 200 largest German companies, the ratio of men to women is 11:1 (DIW).
Our activities

We are breaking new ground in our efforts to live up to our claim and getting involved where decisions are made in companies and institutions. We want to raise awareness – especially at the top management level – of how deeply rooted role stereotypes can influence communication and behavior. Through training programs and other activities, we provide managers with techniques they can use to recognize and actively counter these stereotypes.

The initiative is equally committed to placing these issues on the agenda at conferences and trade fairs and developing its own formats, such as roundtables and dialog events. The target groups invited to attend are extremely diverse. Not only do we want to reach today’s managers, we also want to increase awareness among tomorrow’s leaders, i.e., schoolchildren, students, and those just starting out in their careers. And finally, we plan to use proactive media relations to win over the general public to our cause.

All of our activities are designed with the real world in mind and involve collaboration across sectors: consolidating experiences in business, academia, and politics is our best option to drive a shift in awareness throughout the whole of society.