

## GIZ Gender Competition 2022

**Mentoring program “Women for Leadership” / “Frauen gehen in Führung” 2021**  
**A gender empowerment and mainstreaming initiative of G400**

**Bringing women into leadership – a concern of GIZ and G400**

For many years, GIZ has pursued the goal of increasing the proportion of women in management and executive positions in the company in order to create equal opportunities for men and women in the workplace and give women access to higher GIZ remuneration bands (cf. [GIZ Equal Opportunities Plan 2020-2022](#), p. 4). However, when the mentoring program was set up in 2019, in GIZ only 42.2% of all leadership and management positions (bands 5-7, excluding National Employees) were filled by women, while their share of the company's total workforce is 58.8% (see [GIZ Integrated Corporate Report 2019](#), p. 39).

There was also still room for improvement in the G400 division: Only every 16th woman hold a Band 6 position compared to every 7th man (cf. internal departmental analysis 2019). While these figures show the success of the equality policy of recent years, on the one hand, they also show the need not to let up on the issue, on the other: “We’ve achieved a lot, now let’s keep going” – as the GIZ equal opportunities officer Renate Scheib put very well (see [IDA News from 24th June 2020](#)).

**The G400 mentoring program “Women for leadership” / “Frauen gehen in Führung”** aimed to help reinforce this positive trend **empowering women to “take the lead” be it formally or informally**. It was launched in October 2020 as a pilot project and part of the divisional change process Vier21 – supported by the management team, the G400 change alliance and the gender focal points of the division. The mentoring program complemented existing gender initiatives of G400, e.g. the Gender Code of Conduct with its measures, the engagement of the change alliance, especially with regard to the implementation of the principle cooperation and leadership. By supporting and promoting both female mentees and mentors to discuss and further develop their management skills, personal goals and preparations for the next career step, the mentoring program contributed to the dissemination and deepening of a new cooperative and diverse management culture in the division G400.

**The added value of the mentoring program “Women for Leadership”**

Mentoring is a recognized and successful measure, which can be carried out at different levels to motivate, recruit and guide personnel as well as to foster networking and collegiality. A mentoring program for women aims at changing and diversifying corporate culture by motivating women for leadership positions. However, the mentees are not the only ones benefitting from mentoring. On the contrary, all benefit: mentees and mentors, women and men, corporate culture and the change process regarding cooperation and leadership. By piloting the mentoring program “Women for leadership” the division G400 took up this challenge **to champion gender mainstreaming bottom-up**. By motivating women to assume responsibility and commitment to leading positions, the mentoring program ultimately contributed to strengthening a gender-responsive corporate culture – within G400 as well as the whole GIZ.

This was reflected in the threefold objectives of the G400 mentoring program:

- (1) To empower female specialists, the mentees, to more actively take up leadership and management tasks (with or without formal authority) as well as to enter into leadership positions.
- (2) To support mentors, to expand their leadership skills and to learn and deepen new cooperative leadership styles in the sense of Cooperation and Leadership.
- (3) To strengthen cross-sector networking and collegial cooperation within the department.

## What was the added value for mentees and mentors? How did they benefit from the program?

### As mentees they:

- Established trustful relationship with an experienced mentor (male or female), creating a space for career advice as well as personal development.
- Were introduced to leadership topics and started to develop leadership skills.
- Expanded their network within G400 across sectors and groups.

### As mentors they:

- Received fresh impetus through the relationship established with a female professional.
- Reflected and improved their leadership skills through feedback and regular exchange.
- Expanded their network to other managers in the department across sectors and groups.
- Got to know high-potential professionals.

## How the mentoring program “Women for Leadership” works

The mentoring program “Women for Leadership” consists of three key elements:

- **The self-guided tandem** is the key component of the initiative. Selected female professionals establish trustful and confidential relationship with a mentor (m/w) with leadership experience. The tandem works self-directed as an outcome of a careful matching exercise.
- **Joint group events** give external input and facilitate networking throughout the course of the year. Mentees and mentors are invited to three group events that is: the kick-off, mid-term and closing event. The group events offer workshops on leadership and management with an external coach, networking, together with joint sessions for group reflection regarding challenges and emerging opportunities in women leadership. For the pilot phase the sessions were held virtually, subject to Covid-19 situation.
- **Peer-to-peer exchange:** Mentees are encouraged to meet across different sectors in small groups for informal self- directed peer consultations. The meetings take place monthly and are based on personal topics as well as interests.

The initiative’s **target group** for the first completed phase were:

- 15-20 mentees: female professionals in salary bands 2-5 of G400
- 15-20 mentors: male and female supervisors with leadership positions (AV and Component leaders), salary bands 5-6 in G400

Since this was a pilot project, it was not clear how many would apply. It was therefore very gratifying that we received 50 applications from mentees and that 18 supervisors from all three groups of G400 were willing to become mentors.

### **The initiative’s quality results for the first completed phase**

- 50 applications from mentees
- 18 mentees and mentors from all 3 groups (G410, G420, G430)
- Careful matching of 18 tandems.
- 3 virtual events with all participants in January, June and November 2021 as well as 1 onboarding event for mentors in January 2021 (support from compassorange)
- Positive feedback from participants (informally as well as formal evaluation as part of the closing event in November 2021)
- HR has recognized “Women for Leadership” as a best practice and has published and linked to it on their intranet site
- Scaling-up in preparation. The mentoring program 2022 will be rolled out for all five divisions of GloBe.

### **The perfect match – the key to a successful mentoring program**

The major task for the steering group was to select and carefully match mentees and mentors according to their interests and across groups and sectors. First, the mentees were selected by draw. To have a diversity of participants, certain “pots” were awarded to division or age groups as well as to salary bands and location abroad. After consultations with the Human Resource (HR) department and the works council, a different form of selection process was not deemed possible. Applying selection criteria in personnel matters is reserved for the HR department and can therefore not be legally implemented by a steering group. Representatives from HR and work’s council were then invited to the selection and matching process.

If the mentoring experience should be helpful and personally enriching to mentees and mentors, 18 perfect matches were needed. Therefore, the steering group invested a good amount of time to carefully match the 18 tandems. The basis for the matching were submitted short CVs by mentors as well as CVs and motivation letters by mentees.

### **Evaluation of mentoring program**

In preparation for the closing event in November 2021 a survey to evaluate the mentoring program was conducted with the help of two interns. The results show that the careful matching was successful: Nearly all participants say that they would recommend the mentoring program and the great majority was (very) satisfied with their match. Mentees as well as mentors reported back that the mentoring was very useful to them and that they had great time in their tandem. They especially highlighted that the mentoring had created a safe space for personal development, career planning and mutual learning.

*"The perspective of the mentee on our culture and processes was very different and complementary to my own perspective. It helped to check my way of conceiving reality and act accordingly."*

#### **Challenges and success factors**

Major challenges encountered in implementing the program individually and together were:

- More thematic & practical inputs of how to improve leadership skills on the job (instruments, training).
- Connect with ongoing discussions in GIZ e.g. career development to address structural challenges.
- Virtual working made the initiative financially efficient but deprived the participants the possibility for face to face interactions that fosters confidentiality.
- Navigating leadership in a context of intersectionality, including balancing work life balance related concerns for most applicants.
- Staff rotation meant frequent changes in contacts persons responsible for steering the program.

What were the key success factors?

- The unfettered support from the G400 leadership and management team.
- Careful preparation and coordination of the concept with key stakeholders in GIZ and G400, e.g. HR, works council, gender equality officer, gender focal points and change alliance.
- A team of extremely dedicated mentors and mentees
- A very responsive steering group that presided over the roll-out of the initiative.
- Excellent external input from the retained firm compassorange, specialized in gender, leadership and mentoring.

*"I congratulate the initiative; it was a great experience, and I would support its further development and encourage its permanency as a tool for GIZ."*

### **Better together – joint work to make the initiative possible**

Thanks to many people the mentoring program “Women for leadership” has become a success. From the beginning, the pilot project was supported by the management team of G400 and rooted in the joint divisional process of the G400 Four21 change process as well as supported by the division gender focal points. The steering group consisted of a junior advisor, advisors, a project manager and a section head – all drawn from different projects and genders within G400. The following people were part of the steering group (some throughout the whole process, others for a certain period): Esther May, Marius Walter, Miriam Leiding, Katharina Oemmelen, Opimbi Osore, Diana Pauly, Hannah Seeger and Ulrich Wehnert.

The initiative cooperated with HR department, worked with the equal opportunity officer as well as AIZ in the development of the approach. Thanks to the management team’s sponsorship the mentoring program had a budget of 8.000 EUR for contracting an external consultant to prepare and guide the onboarding of mentors as well as the three joint events. The input and moderation of the external consultancy firm “compassorange”, specialized in gender and leadership, was a key success factor. In addition, for the mid-term event, an input from FareShare e.V on feminist leadership reflections was integrated into the program.

### **Conclusion and Outlook**

Following the successful implementation of the pilot, the initiative will be scaled-up in the entire Globe department in 2022 – targeting more potential women leaders as a contribution towards gender parity. The program will be expanded to around 30 mentees and 30 mentors from all five divisions of GloBe and carefully cross-match mentees and mentors. The scaling-up will re-use the tried and tested pilot concept and enhance it with the input of the 2021 evaluation. Furthermore, the alumnae of the first batch will be involved in the second phase for peer networking during the joint events. A new operative steering group consisting of six members from four divisions is already preparing the scaling-up and finalizing the new concept. They are supported by a strategic support group consisting of some members of the old steering group as well as GloBe gender focal points. The new call for applications will be sent out mid-December 2021.