

GCRI INTERVIEW

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Could you please describe the Go MINT! initiative?

The shortage of qualified employees in the so-called MINT subjects (mathematics, informatics, natural sciences, and technology) is a threat to Germany's reputation as a center for research and business. Go MINT!, the National Pact for Women in MINT Careers, which brings together politics, business, science, and the media, is designed to change the image of MINT professions in society. Go MINT! is part of the federal government's Qualification Initiative and was launched in 2008 at the instigation of the Federal Ministry for Education and Research with the aim of increasing young women's interest in scientific and technical degree courses and attracting female university graduates to careers in business.

The success factors of Go MINT! are the pact partners, which all actively support this endeavor with a wide range of activities and initiatives to advise young women on their studies and careers. The aims of Go MINT! are fixed in a memorandum, signed initially by every partner. Since the beginning of the program, the number of partners has more than tripled and currently there are more than 150 partners. The growing number of partners indicates that MINT business and science industries are unable and unwilling to work any longer without the potential offered by women. The Go MINT! office is the central hub of the pact's partner network. It focuses the activities of Go MINT! and informs and advises the pact's members. It also carries out a wide range of PR work. Go MINT! is the only initiative that addresses women and MINT at the national level.

In which areas has the Go MINT! project had the greatest impact? Do you see any developments in schools, research institutions, or industry?

During its first phase from 2008 to 2011, Go MINT! was very active in attracting more young women to scientific and technical majors. The pact's tightly knit network creates links and provides the opportunity to exchange information between government bodies, companies, foundations, research institutes, universities, associations, and women's technological organizations.

One important goal is to create synergy, to show best practices and their effects, and to allow the partners to learn from each other. There is a lot of knowledge about how to reach young women. Now it is time to implement it nationwide and on a permanent basis.

A very effective cooperation project that has come about as part of the pact is the [NiedersachsenTechnikum](#), which was set up by the federal region of Lower Saxony as well as some of the region's companies and universities. The six-month technical course makes it possible for young women to gain their first practical experience in MINT subjects. Other federal regions are already exploring ways of adopting this successful model.

Go MINT!'s success can also be illustrated in figures. Today, Germany provides more supportive measures in MINT for young women. From 2008 to 2011, with over 87,400 additional participants on the part of the pact partners, the pact's goal of at least 20,000 new possibilities for young women to participate in such measures was clearly exceeded.

Additionally, there are also more female MINT graduates. According to current information from the Federal Office of Statistics and the calculations of the Go MINT! office, over 33,000 new female students opted for a degree in engineering in the 2011 academic year. That is almost three times the number of new female students in 1995. The picture in mathematics and the natural sciences is similar. Here the number of new female students has increased by a factor of 2.5 since 1996 to 54,000.

Where do you see further need for improvement with regards to STEM education in Germany?

The figures are good, but not good enough. Attracting young women to study MINT subjects is only the beginning. Despite the increase in numbers, too few female MINT graduates are pursuing careers in business. Advice and support programs must continually be developed in order to boost the potential provided by these highly qualified female graduates in technical areas. A special challenge is to motivate those female graduates for careers in business in particular. Therefore, within the Go MINT! network, ideas and best practices are being passed on and initiatives are being developed to reach this goal efficiently.

One example of a contribution to the pact is Bavaria's university funding program with 442,000 euros for 2013/14. Eleven universities have already been successful in receiving funding lines for their support measures of women's MINT study courses. The most successful applicants presented sustainable and innovative project ideas, as well as a future development plan of measures that have already been effectively implemented. The Bavarian universities are not only aiming to attract more women to MINT subjects, but they are also retaining them in MINT fields within industry.

How does Germany compare with other countries with respect to STEM education?

The *She Figure 2012* shows that Germany has to continue with its efforts: "In comparing the degree of masculinisation of engineering, manufacturing and construction cross-nationally, it appears that less than one in five PhD holders in

this field is a woman - in Japan (12%), Germany (15%), Slovenia (15%), and Luxembourg (17%). On the contrary, in Portugal, a gender balance characterises the field of engineering, with 50% female PhD graduates. Portugal is clearly an exceptional case as all other countries still have a long way to go before reaching an equal share of women and men in engineering, manufacturing, and construction. The proportion of female PhDs in this field is above 35% only in three countries: Latvia (36%), Lithuania (38%) and Turkey (39%)." (European Commission: *She Figures 2012*, p. 53)

What is your vision for the future?

It is now a matter of continuing to pursue our current strategy. More women will be reached if practical knowledge is used effectively and successful models are disseminated at every career level.

In this context, the Go MINT! office is delighted to have the opportunity to share information at the international level.