

# **Girls' Day in Germany: an Australian perspective**

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## **About the author**

The idea for this project arose from the combination of my professional and personal interest in media, technology and communications; issues related to gender equality and equity; and in Germany and the German language.

I am a Director at the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, having joined the Australian Public Service in 2009 as a Senior Policy Advisor at the Australian Media and Communications Authority. Prior to this, I practised as a media, entertainment, intellectual property and communications lawyer.

I am involved in a number of arts and women's organisations, which provide me with the opportunity to work with some very inspiring people. I love Melbourne, but since I lived there in 2001, part of me is always thinking of Berlin.

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## 1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to consider Girls' Day in Germany as an example of a long term national strategy designed to broaden the scope of career options considered by girls and women. In particular, a strategy designed to foster the skills and knowledge required in order for girls and women to fully participate in the digital economy.<sup>1</sup> This paper is designed to:

1. introduce an Australian audience to Girls' Day, including explaining what it is, how it functions in practice and providing an account of my own experience of two Girls Day 2011 events;
2. place Girls' Day in the context of another important national strategy designed to encourage girls and women to enter 'non-traditional' careers for women in Germany;
3. consider the successes and challenges of Girls' Day in Germany; and
4. consider the possible benefits and challenges of initiating Girls' Day, or an equivalent, in Australia.

## 2 Background

In Australia, as in Germany, Canada, the US and the UK, women remain substantially underrepresented in the fields of information communication technology (ICT), mathematics, science, engineering and other technical and trades careers.<sup>2</sup> For example, women account for only 18 per cent of the ICT workforce in the State of Victoria, Australia (out of a total of 45 per cent of the total Victorian workforce).<sup>3</sup> In 2009 in Germany, female students accounted for only 10 per cent of those studying ICT and only 22 per cent of engineering graduates were women.<sup>4</sup> The gender disparity persists despite basic formal legal equality having existed in these jurisdictions for many years: women are permitted to work in these fields and are legally entitled to the same pay and conditions as their male colleagues. Furthermore, the difference is clearly a product of 'choice' rather than capability, as girls achieve equally good results in subject areas such as science and maths while at school.<sup>5</sup>

The limited number of women in these fields has been recognised as a problem by governments, business, academics and the community for some time. The characterisations of the causes have been various, although often interconnected. For example, it has been suggested that girls and women do not have an accurate view about what a career in these fields could entail; that they do not have the confidence that they could develop the skills to work and succeed in these fields; and that the male-dominated nature of these fields (and therefore workplaces) is a self-perpetuating disincentive. The failure to engage and retain women in these fields has

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'digital economy' is discussed in the 'Definitions and terminology' section below.

<sup>2</sup> Little, A. J.; León de la Barra, B. A. 'Attracting girls to science, engineering and technology: an Australian perspective', *European Journal of Engineering Education*, Vol. 34 Issue 5, (Oct 2009) p439-445; Miliszewska, I. and Moore, A., 'Encouraging Girls to Consider a Career in ICT: A Review of Strategies', *Journal of Information Technology Education*, v9, (2010) p143-166.

<sup>3</sup> Multimedia Victoria, '2010 ICT Skills Snapshot: The state of ICT skills in Victoria' (2010) p9.

<sup>4</sup> Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancegleichheit (Kompetenzzentrum), 'Nationaler Pakt für Frauen in MINT-05 Daten & Fakten' (information sheet on file with author), (undated).

<sup>5</sup> See for example the international comparison of maths and science scores at year 8 level provided using the database created to access the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 'Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)', (2007) at <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/identimss/report.aspx>.

been blamed variously on schools, educational institutions, the reality of workplace conditions for women, parental attitudes and, more generally, the nature of socialisation of girls and women.

Varied perspectives exist about why the limited number of women in these fields is a 'problem'. From a gender equality and equity perspective, the marginalisation of women from particular aspects of society and the economy is detrimental to the project of substantive gender equality and equity, and the benefits that flow to women (and the community more broadly) when these are achieved. From a purely economic perspective, increasing the number of women trained to work in these fields addresses both the issue of skills shortages and the opportunity cost of not training the 'best and brightest' women workers. For example, in Germany, the skills shortage in ICT and technical and science related careers is creating significant concern for employers.<sup>6</sup> The discourse regarding these political and philosophical perspectives indicates broad agreement that there is indeed a problem.

A particular focus of this paper is the skills and training needed to ensure women are fully engaged with, and taking leadership roles in, the digital economy; which is becoming an increasingly important part of the broader economy and society in each of the countries listed above. The skills required to work and lead in the digital economy (including ICT skills and advanced digital literacy<sup>7</sup>) are developed through working and studying in the fields of technology, mathematics, science and engineering. The question then arises: what programs and strategies have been developed to assist girls and women develop the requisite skills or interest in these fields?

An examination of a 2009 review of digital literacy policies and programs in Australia reveals that of the listed Commonwealth, state and territory policies and programs aimed at promoting or increasing levels of digital media literacy, none of them appeared to specifically target girls or women.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, gender has been identified as an issue that requires specific attention in a number information communications technology (ICT) policies and programs.<sup>9</sup> Examples of such programs include Education Queensland's *Girls and ICT strategy 2005-2008* and *Girls and ICTs Framework for Action 2003-2004*<sup>10</sup> and the Digital Divas schools research project in Victoria (funded by the Australian Research Council).<sup>11</sup> However, although these programs exist, there is evidence to suggest that gender-focused strategies to engage girls in ICT are not widespread in Australia and have tended to be project based; limited in scale, duration and funding.<sup>12</sup> For example, while the 2011 National ICT Careers Week did include some activities in some states designed for girls, there was no prominent gender-targeting and the website and

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<sup>6</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Forschungsreihe Girls Day – Berufsimages aus der Sicht von Girls' Day Teilnehmerinnen', (2010), p92-3.

<sup>7</sup> The term 'digital literacy' are discussed in the 'Definitions and terminology' section below.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Media and Communications Authority, 'Audit of Australian Digital Media Literacy Program 2009' at: [http://www.acma.gov.au/scripts/nc.dll?WEB/STANDARD/1001/pc=PC\\_311472](http://www.acma.gov.au/scripts/nc.dll?WEB/STANDARD/1001/pc=PC_311472) (2009).

<sup>9</sup> Miliszewska, I. and Moore, A., 'Encouraging Girls to Consider a Career in ICT: A Review of Strategies', Journal of Information Technology Education, v9 (2010) p143-166.

<sup>10</sup> Education Queensland, 'Girls and ICT Archive' page at <http://www.learningplace.com.au/defaulteqa.asp?orgid=48&suborgid=286>

<sup>11</sup> See Digital Divas website for detailed description of project, participating researchers and institutions at: <http://digitaldivasclub.org/vic/>

<sup>12</sup> Fisher, J., Lang, C., Craig, A., Forgasz, H., and Lazarenko, K, 'Report on the Effectiveness of 'Girls Only' Computer Clubs in Australia', at [http://www.vicictforwomen.com.au/resources/documents/Report\\_Girls\\_only\\_Computer\\_Clubs\\_071.pdf](http://www.vicictforwomen.com.au/resources/documents/Report_Girls_only_Computer_Clubs_071.pdf) (2007).

collateral material only featured an image of a young man.<sup>13</sup> As the activities in the National ICT Careers Week demonstrate, while gender-focused programs may exist, they are not part of a clear, long-term national strategy.

The focus of the remainder of this paper is to consider whether Girls' Day in Germany provides an example that could inform programs or strategies deployed in Australia.

### 3 Definitions and terminology

**Digital literacy:** the term 'digital literacy' and its variations (e.g. media literacy, digital media literacy), have been given a range of definitions in academic and regulatory settings.<sup>14</sup> However, in this paper, the definition used by Ofcom (the United Kingdom's media and communications regulator) has been adopted. That is: "*the ability to use, understand and create communications.*"<sup>15</sup>

Ofcom's definition encompasses both the ability to critically engage with digital media, and the ability to create and contribute to media and communications. It is this second element which is of particular interest in this project, as the skills needed to do this 'crossover' with ICT skills.

As with literacy more broadly, there are degrees of digital literacy. Highly sophisticated digital literacy skills may also require ICT skills. For example, practical ICT skills are required to create a website, write an application for a smart phone or prepare an audiovisual blog. Furthermore, an advanced theoretical understanding of ICT, media and communications is required in order engage with the policy and practical issues arising in these sectors of the economy.

**Digital economy:** the economic and social activity facilitated through digital networks and communications infrastructure. The definition used by the Australian Federal Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy is: "the global network of economic and social activities that are enabled by platforms such as the internet, mobile and sensor networks."<sup>16</sup>

**MINT careers:** in Germany, careers requiring skills in mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology are now widely referred to as the MINT careers, a term this paper adopts. These careers are often referred to as the STEM professions (science, technology, engineering and maths) in the United States, while in Australia they are often discussed in terms of the SET professions (science, engineering and technology).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> There were events targeted at girls – IBM's EXITE (Exploring Interests in Technology & Engineering) Camps for girls and the Southern Cross University Women in Technology program for Year 9 girls from Coffs Harbour High School at: <http://www.ictcareersweek.info/>.

<sup>14</sup> Australian Media and Communications Authority, '*Digital media literacy in Australia—Key indicators and research sources*', at: [http://www.acma.gov.au/scripts/nc.dll?WEB/STANDARD/1001/pc=PC\\_311472](http://www.acma.gov.au/scripts/nc.dll?WEB/STANDARD/1001/pc=PC_311472) (2009) p5.

<sup>15</sup> Ofcom, '*What is media literacy?*', at: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/media-literacy/about/whatis/> (2010).

<sup>16</sup> Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, '*Australia's Digital Economy: Future Directions*', at: [http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital\\_economy/what\\_is\\_the\\_digital\\_economy/australias\\_digital\\_economy\\_future\\_directions](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/digital_economy/what_is_the_digital_economy/australias_digital_economy_future_directions) (2011).

<sup>17</sup> See for example Federal Department of Education, Training and Workplace Relations webpage entitled '*Skills - Science Engineering and Technology Skills – Publications*' at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Resources/Pages/ScienceEngineerTechnologySkills.aspx>.

**Gender equality and gender equity:** these are contested terms, however, this paper adopts the simple explanation provided by the UNESCO Unit for the Promotion of the Status of Women and Gender Equality:

*“Gender equality, equality between men and women, entails the concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.*

*Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective need. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.”<sup>18</sup>*

**Note regarding style:**

All names of organisations have been translated into English, with the original German name provided in the footnotes.

## 4 Methodology

This project is based on a combination of qualitative, quantitative and desktop research. A primary source of information was the interviews I conducted in May/June 2011. The interviewees were selected based on whether they either personally play a key role in the organisation of Girls’ Day or represent an organisation that plays such a role. The interviewees represented a range of key public and private organisations involved in the Girls’ Day project, including the:

- **Competence Centre for Technology-Diversity-Equal Chances (Competence Centre):**<sup>19</sup> the primary organisation responsible for the coordination and operation of Girls’ Day;
- **Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth Employment:**<sup>20</sup> one of the two Federal Ministries directly involved in Girls’ Day (the other being the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research);
- **German Trade Union Confederation – Federal Executive:**<sup>21</sup> the federal-level, umbrella organisation representing trade unions in Germany;
- **General Association of Employers’ Associations of the Metal and Electrical Industry Association:**<sup>22</sup> one of the largest employer representative organisations in Germany;

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<sup>18</sup> UN Unit for the Promotion of the Status of Women and Gender Equality, ‘Gender equality and equity: A summary review of UNESCO’s accomplishments since the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995)’ at: [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121145e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001211/121145e.pdf), (2000).

<sup>19</sup> Kompetenzzentrum: Technik - Diversity - Chancengleichheit, website at: <http://www.kompetenzz.de/>

<sup>20</sup> Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend Arbeit, website at: <http://www.bmfsfj.de/>.

<sup>21</sup> Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund –Bundesvorstand website at: <http://www.dgb.de/>

<sup>22</sup> Gesamtverband der Arbeitgeberverbände der Metall- und Elektro-Industrie e.V. website at: <http://www.gesamtmetall.de/>

- **Initiative D21 e.V.:**<sup>23</sup> a non-profit organisation representing key private and public organisations for the purpose of developing Germany's information/digital society;
- **Life e.V. Education, Environment and Equal Opportunity:**<sup>24</sup> a non-profit organisation working on achieving gender equality through education, advocacy and networking, with a focus on environmentally sustainable technology and trades/technical training for women; and
- **Cisco Systems:**<sup>25</sup> a multinational electronics and communications company.

The names of the individual interviewees and their titles are listed in **Attachment 1**.

The project also involved:

- a review of the evaluation work conducted by the Competence Centre into the progress and success of Girls' Day. The Competence Centre has been operating a program of annual standardised evaluation of the participants (both the girls and their hosts) since 2002;<sup>26</sup>
- a review of the information produced (soft and hard copy) in relation to Girls' Day, other relevant programs conducted in Germany; and
- attendance at two Girls' Day events on 14 April 2011.

## 5 What is Girls' Day?

Girls' Day is an annual event in Germany in April, in which school-aged girls from grade 5 upwards (generally between the ages of 10-15) attend a program in organisations with a technology, ICT, engineering, science or trades focus. The participating organisations include colleges, universities, training facilities, research institutes and private businesses.

Girls' Day was founded in Germany in 2001, inspired by the idea of a 'take your daughter to work' day in the United States. The first event was arranged with only two months preparation and 8000 girls attended. Since 2001, over a million girls have attended a Girls' Day program.<sup>27</sup> The name itself was chosen through consultation with the target audience.<sup>28</sup>

The primary goal of the event is to provide girls with the opportunity to experience and consider career options in which women remain significantly underrepresented and which they may not consider as a result of traditional socialisation, unless otherwise prompted. The majority of young women in Germany have continued to choose traditionally 'female' education and training pathways, such as those designed for carers, saleswomen, teachers, hairdressers and medical assistants.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Initiative 21 website ([www.initiative21.de](http://www.initiative21.de)) is currently being updated, older version available at: <http://old.initiated21.org/de/Home.222.0.html>

<sup>24</sup> Life e.V.: Bildung - Umwelt - Chancengleichheit website at: <http://www.life-online.de/index.html>

<sup>25</sup> Cisco Systems at: <http://www.cisco.com/web/DE/index.html>.

<sup>26</sup> See "Evaluation of Girls' Day" page (in German) at [http://www.girls-day.de/Daten\\_und\\_Fakten/Veroeffentlichungen/Begleitforschung\\_zum\\_Girls\\_Day](http://www.girls-day.de/Daten_und_Fakten/Veroeffentlichungen/Begleitforschung_zum_Girls_Day)

<sup>27</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Der Girls' Day – Mädchen-Zukunftstag' at [http://www.girls-day.de/Girls\\_Day\\_Info](http://www.girls-day.de/Girls_Day_Info) (2011).

<sup>28</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Der Girls' Day – eine Idee entwickelt sich' (Information sheet on file with author) (2011).

<sup>29</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Ausbildungsanfängerinnen in den 10 am stärksten besetzten Ausbildungsberufen in %' (Information sheet on file with author) (2011).



The Girls' Day project is supported and supervised by a number of private and public partner institutions, including: the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the Confederation of German Employer's Associations, the Confederation of Trade Unions, the Federation of German Industries, the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts, and the Initiative 21.<sup>30</sup> These participants represent many of the most significant and powerful organisations across the German public and private sector and together form the Girls' Day Steering Group.

The activities undertaken by the Competence Centre to coordinate and operate Girls' Day are primarily funded by the German Federal Government (currently on a triennial basis – the maximum length of time possible for federal ministry project funding) and the European Social Fund.<sup>31</sup> In addition, other project partners and state-based government bodies have given funding for sub-projects connected to Girls' Day. Furthermore, many state and regional organisations offer 'in kind' support by providing the human resources to support and coordinate Girls' Day within their states or regions.<sup>32</sup> Berlin, Bremen and Mecklenburg Vorpommern are the only states/regions with a full-time dedicated Girl's Day project leader.

Girls' Day, or similar events, now exist in 10 European countries: Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Austria, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Kosovo, Poland, Spain Switzerland and Liechtenstein. While the implementation and naming of the events varies, they are all focused on broadening the potential career options for school age girls.

## 6 How does Girls' Day function in practice?

Girls' Day is coordinated by the Competence Centre, which includes coordinating and operating the event itself, working with the Steering Group, dealing with the media, and running an evaluation program. The Competence Centre organises a number of projects in addition to Girls' Day under its 3 areas of competence: 'Digital Integration', 'Education, Further Education and Careers' and 'Technical Colleges, Science and Research'.<sup>33</sup> As in Australia, projects within these streams often gain funding and operate for just a few years. However, Girls' Day, which falls within the second stream, has repeatedly secured funding (issues associated with funding are considered in further detail below).

Decisions by the Steering Group are made by consensus and negotiation, rather than by formal, majority vote. The Steering Group meets twice a year, however, the Competence Centre keeps the members informed of major developments and seeks contributions regarding key publications and on important strategic and organisational decisions.<sup>34</sup>

Girls' Day is not arranged uniformly across Germany, as differences exist in how states and regions support and organise the event. This is largely due to the

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<sup>30</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Project Information' (Information sheet on file with author) (2011).

<sup>31</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Project Information' (Information sheet on file with author), (2011).

<sup>32</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Girls' Day in den Bundesländern', webpage at "[http://www.girls-day.de/Girls\\_Day\\_Info/Girls\\_Day\\_in\\_den\\_Bundeslaendern](http://www.girls-day.de/Girls_Day_Info/Girls_Day_in_den_Bundeslaendern).

<sup>33</sup> Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancegleichheit, webpage entitled 'Profil' at <http://www.kompetenzz.de/Profil>.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Kompetenzzentrum.

federated structure of the German political system, in which the schools are the responsibility of the states and where these states have significant cultural, economic, political and structural differences. The approximately 367 regional workgroups differ in their constitution and activities, however, at the state level many include representatives of their national partner organisations (such as unions and employer organisations), along with regionally based equality and women's officers.<sup>35</sup>

Girls' Day is thus simultaneously a centralised program (e.g. coordinated, presented, branded and evaluated by the Competence Centre and supervised by the Steering Group) and decentralised (e.g. each participating business/organisation designs its own program and the approach taken by schools, parents groups, regional groups varies significantly).

The programs offered at each participating organisation for Girls' Day itself are displayed on the Girls' Day website, where the girls can search according to postcode or nation-wide.<sup>36</sup> Participating businesses and organisations register their Girls' Day programs with the Competence Centre, listing information such as how many places are available, any age limits and a description of the activity. However, the Competence Centre is aware that there are more participating organisations than are listed on its website, as some organisations operate events without registration.<sup>37</sup> The organisations range in size: from small businesses to global companies delivering a Girls' Day program in multiple cities.

Girls select programs either independently through public offers, through private contacts or may attend a program as a school group. Over the years, the number of girls attending through an 'open/public offer' has increased from 73 per cent to 89 per cent, while the number of girls attending with a school group or because they have a personal connection with the host organisation has decreased.<sup>38</sup>

The Girls' Day website targets 5 audiences: the girls themselves,<sup>39</sup> businesses/organisations that offer (or may offer) a Girls' Day program,<sup>40</sup> schools,<sup>41</sup> parents<sup>42</sup> and regional workgroups.<sup>43</sup> A significant amount of material is available on this website, which is designed to ensure that each of these target groups is provided with the relevant information to be able to participate in Girls' Day and to avoid 'reinventing the wheel' each year. For example, business/organisations can obtain 'Tips and ideas for the layout (of the day)'<sup>44</sup> or use the 'Events-Tool' (which enables them to set-out their event offer once registered with the Competence Centre). Host organisations are encouraged to provide 'hands on' activities to the girls, rather than only providing tours or lectures.

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<sup>35</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Als Arbeitskreis' at: <http://www.girls-day.de/Arbeitskreise>.

<sup>36</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, webpage entitled 'Hier findest du Aktionen für Mädchen zum Girls' Day 2011 mit freien Plätzen' at <http://www.girls-day.de/aktool/ez/eventsuche.aspx>

<sup>37</sup> Source: comments made by 3 interviewees.

<sup>38</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Evaluation des Girls' Day – Mädchen-Zukunftstag 2010', (2010) (Information sheet on file with author).

<sup>39</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Girls' Day ist dein Zukunftstag' page at: <http://www.girls-day.de/Maedchen>.

<sup>40</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Als Veranstalterin oder Veranstalter' page at: [http://www.girls-day.de/Unternehmen\\_Organisationen](http://www.girls-day.de/Unternehmen_Organisationen)

<sup>41</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Als Lehrer oder Leherin' page at: <http://www.girls-day.de/Schulen>

<sup>42</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Als Eltern' page at: <http://www.girls-day.de/Eltern>

<sup>43</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Als Arbeitskreise' page at: <http://www.girls-day.de/Arbeitskreise>.

<sup>44</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Welche Aktionen können Unternehmen und Organisationen organisieren?' page at [http://www.girls-day.de/Unternehmen\\_Organisationen/Praxis/Tipps\\_Ideen](http://www.girls-day.de/Unternehmen_Organisationen/Praxis/Tipps_Ideen)

## 7 My attendance at Girls' Day 2011, Berlin

I attended two events on Girls' Day on 14 April 2011 and was keen to experience two very different types of program. The first event was at Cisco Systems and the second was part of the ongoing national Roberta Initiative (which provides training for girls in robotics), a day-length robotics course at Live e.V. The first event was set in a corporate environment with a school group, while the second was a group of self-selected girls from various schools held at a gender-conscious training institution.

Berlin seemed to me to be the perfect city to experience Girls' Day, given it has the highest attendance at the event of all the states in Germany, with an average of 12 per cent of all girl students attending.<sup>45</sup> My two experiences are detailed in order to give an indication of the sort of event that was available to the girls who participated in 2011.

### 7.1 Cisco Systems

Cisco Systems has been offering a Girls' Day program since 2006. In Berlin this has been conducted and coordinated by Carsten Johnston, the Area Academy Manager. Johnston, trained as an educator, is a passionate supporter of Girls' Day and was central in introducing the Girls' Day program to Cisco Systems. In addition to Girls' Day, Johnston is responsible for the Cisco Networking Academy in Germany, which is a

*“a global education program that teaches students how to design, build, troubleshoot, and secure computer networks for increased access to career and economic opportunities in communities around the world...[it] provides online courses, interactive tools, and hands-on learning activities to help individuals prepare for ICT and networking careers.”<sup>46</sup>*

Girls' Day at Cisco Systems is therefore part of a broader Cisco Systems program of engaging with students, offering skills development and familiarising students with their branding and technology. However, each Cisco Systems office in Germany runs a different Girls' Day program, with the programs in Düsseldorf and Frankfurt designed for younger students than the program in Berlin.

Cisco Systems Berlin has a relationship with a Berlin school (the Wolfgang-Borchert-Oberschule), which sends a selected group between the ages of 14-15 and a teacher to Cisco Systems for Girls' Day every year. The school principal, Anja Tempelhoff, studied biology and technology, and was the first teacher to be accredited for training in the Roberta Initiative (a part of which I attended as my second Girls' Day event) in Berlin in 2004. Accordingly, the school consciously seeks to engage students in technology and ICT programs and projects, and offers (in Anja Tempelhoff) a successful role model in ICT and technology to its female students.

In the 2011 program, approximately 24 students attended with their teacher. The girls started the day with a tour of the firm and a brief talk entitled “Who actually works here?”, in which Johnston gave a frank account of the perks and challenges of working for a global ICT company. It was followed by another talk entitled “Cisco

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<sup>45</sup> Life e.V website at page entitled 'Girls' Day 2010: Berlin erreicht bundesweit höchste Beteiligung' at [http://www.life-online.de/aktuelle\\_projekte/p\\_girlsday.html](http://www.life-online.de/aktuelle_projekte/p_girlsday.html)

<sup>46</sup> Cisco Systems website at page entitled 'About networking academy' at: <http://www.cisco.com/web/learning/netacad/academy/index.html>

Systems, the Internet and the Networking Academies – what does this have to do with me?”, in which some of the background to Cisco Systems’ work and education/training techniques were discussed, including how people start working at Cisco Systems and the anticipated future need for skilled labour. The girls asked questions and I was interested to note the teacher was encouraging the girls to engage critically with the material being provided by Cisco Systems, rather than passively accept ‘the spiel’.

The girls spent the majority of the day rotating through four different workshops (in groups of about 6), which were run by trainees of a registered telecommunications traineeship offered by Deutsche Telekom and supported by Cisco Systems. This form of traineeship is a common form of further education in Germany and can operate as an alternative to further university or technical college education. Cisco Systems extends its partnership with Deutsche Telekom to provide the trainees for the Girls’ Day program.

As the trainees were relatively close in age to the girls, they provided tangible example of a first, post-school, step towards a career in ICT and technology, and offered the opportunity for the girls to pose questions about their traineeships in a relaxed and informal setting. The seminars offered by the trainees were: PC-Laboratory; Social Networking, Data Protection, and Cyber-bullying. The small-group seminars were practically focused and interactive, although not directly linked to the core work of Cisco Systems. For example, in the social networking seminar, each of the girls had a computer and was asked to fill in an online form to create a public web profile and consider what information they would enter. The class then discussed why they had (or had not) entered certain information and went on to examine the issues with a fictitious sample profile and concluded the seminar by discussing ways to safely engage with social networking. The girls were (on the whole) very articulate and confident and actively engaged in the workshops.

The day also included a session with a video link to other Girls’ Days programs across Germany (Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, München) and concluded with an open questions and answers session. The evaluation sheets for the program revealed some interesting and positive feedback:

*“I found this day good - I could learn about a new career. I thought, at first, that IT was going to be boring and had too much to do with technical things. But I discovered it was fun and that women could also work successfully in IT.”*

*“It was really great. I think it is good that Girls’ Day exists, so that we can see, so to say, ‘men’s careers’.”*

*“It was a super event! I wish there were days like this more often in the year, because I had such wonderful experiences today.”*

*“I found it really interesting. The trainees (from Telekom Berlin) were very nice. I would like to take part in the Telekom camp.”*

*“I found this day very interesting and enjoyed learning things that interested me”.*

## 7.2 Roberta Project

In the afternoon of Girls' Day 2011, I attended one part of the Roberta Initiative at Life e.V. Life e.V. is an ideal institution from which to run a Roberta program, as it specialises in providing 'hands on' skills training to girls and women through its various other activities and programs.

The Roberta Initiative is an ongoing project, of which the Girls' Day event I attended was only a part.<sup>47</sup> It was developed by the Fraunhofer Intelligent Analysis and Information Systems (IAIS) Institute to "support girls in their relationship to technology and to increase their interest in the subject."<sup>48</sup> The Roberta Project network extends across Germany.<sup>49</sup> The Girls' Day attendees had a 'taste' of a Roberta Initiative, which can be extended with teaching material and assignments that are specifically designed to engage girls and address reservations they may have about engaging with robotics.<sup>50</sup> The project has included students attending both German and international robotics championships.

In Berlin, the Roberta Initiative forms part of the eEducationBerlinMasterplan, which in turn is part of a broader strategy adopted by the Berlin Senate to promote ICT in schools. There are 5 Roberta teachers at Life e.V., who are trained using the Roberta Initiative robots and other pedagogical materials.

At the 2011 Roberta Initiative Girls' Day event, a group of 7 girls spent the day learning about how to build and program a robot. The workshop was designed to give participants confidence in learning technical skills and initiate a process of engagement with technology, science and ICT.<sup>51</sup> When I arrived the students had already completed building their robots under the guidance of their instructor. The girls were working in small groups, about 3 per robot, and programming them to have certain reactions when they moved about the room. Each group had been provided with a Roberta kit – a box that contains an identical Roberta robot. As I arrived, each group was testing the robots and returning to their computers to fix bugs and workshop programming solutions with their teacher. Once the session was finished I had the opportunity to ask the girls what they thought of the day and the comments included:

*"Really good – impressive and fun."*

*"It was good to not just to sit at the computers."*

*"It was fun – something I would do again in my spare time."*

The Roberta Initiative Girls' Day event was a very different kind of Girls' Day experience from the one at Cisco Systems. The girls had self-selected, they came from a range of schools and from different ethnic backgrounds. They focused on learning new technical skills by mastering one task: building and programming a robot. In contrast, the girls at Cisco Systems discussed careers and the ICT job

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<sup>47</sup> Roberta Initiative website at: <http://www.roberta-home.de/>

<sup>48</sup> Projekt Zukunft, 'Personality of the month', at: <http://www.berlin.de/projektzukunft/english/personality-of-the-month/details/datum/2010/09/23/september-2010-anja-tempelhoff/>.

<sup>49</sup> Roberta Project, 'Roberta Netzwerk' webpage at: <http://www.roberta-home.de/de/roberta-netzwerk>.

<sup>50</sup> Projekt Zukunft, 'Personality of the month', at: <http://www.berlin.de/projektzukunft/english/personality-of-the-month/details/datum/2010/09/23/september-2010-anja-tempelhoff/>.

<sup>51</sup> Roberta Initiative, 'Roberta ist eine Initiative des Fraunhofer IAIS' at: <http://www.roberta-home.de/>

market, and had a multi-workshop, diverse program that was practical but not technical. The Roberta Initiative event was held in a teaching and learning environment, rather than a corporate one. Accordingly, in some ways, the Cisco Systems event represented a more radical diversion from its 'day-to-day' business than the event at Life e.V. and probably took more logistical effort to coordinate. Both events appeared to keep the girls highly engaged and the organisations received positive feedback.

## 8 Girls' Day in the context of the National Pact for women in the MINT-Careers

Girls' Day operates in the context of a range of programs and projects designed to engage women in MINT careers. As in Australia, most of the programs are offered on a state or regional basis, such as those programs offered by Life e.V. (which has offered programs that have focused on offering training and education to girls and women in technology and technical based skills since the 1980s). However, the National Pact for Women in MINT Careers is the other most significant *national* program designed to promote and support young women transitioning from school to MINT careers. It is therefore a kind of 'next step' to the project of opening up the careers possibilities for girls that is presented by Girls' Day.

### 8.1 MINT – National Pact for Women in the MINT-Careers

The National Pact for Women in MINT Careers (National Pact) was an initiative of the Federal Minister for Education and Research, Professor Annette Schavan, in 2008. It is targeted at young women at key stages of their school to career development: i.e. school to further education/training, and further education/training to career. It is designed to engage, support and encourage girls and women to be enthusiastic about careers in the MINT professions. The pact partners include employee and employer representative associations, some state governments, research organisations, media, government departments and agencies, major industry companies, further education/training institutions and community associations.<sup>52</sup> As with Girls' Day, the pact adopts the private/public partnership model of project delivery. The project is also coordinated by Competence Centre.

The MINT website includes a search engine for a database of over 900 MINT-focused projects in Germany (although many of these are not necessarily exclusively targeting girls or women). The pact projects themselves include MINT Role Models, CyberMentors, the Fraunhofer Talent Schools for Junior Engineers Academy and the 'tasteMINT' programs.<sup>53</sup> MINT Role Models provides a number of sub-programs designed to provide role models in the MINT profession, seminars with the role model and 'gender sensitivity' training.<sup>54</sup> CyberMentor also provides role models to students, who can access mentors via email to ask questions about MINT careers.<sup>55</sup> The Fraunhofer Talent School and Deutsche Telekom combine efforts to offer the Junior-Engineer Academy, which runs from from the middle-school years to the start

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<sup>52</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, '*Nationaler Pakt für Frauen in MINT-Berufen – 03 Die Paktpartner*'.'' (information sheet on file with author), (undated).

<sup>53</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, '*Nationaler Pakt für Frauen in MINT-Berufen "Komm, mach MINT."*' (pamphlet on file with author), (undated).

<sup>54</sup> MINT Role models website, '*Aktivitäten*' page at: <http://microsites.vdi-online.de/index.php?id=2261>.

<sup>55</sup> CyberMentor website, '*CyberMentor - E-Mentoring für Mädchen im MINT-Bereich*' page at: <https://www.cybermentor.de/ci/index.php/pub/aktuelles>.

of post-school study. The tasteMINT project offers young women the opportunity to experience a 'taste' of further study in these fields in a 3 day practical program at a university or further education institution and then have their aptitude for these fields assessed and feedback provided by trained assessors.<sup>56</sup>

The above projects within the National Pact demonstrate some of the 'next steps' that are required to develop the opportunities offered by the Girls' Day, such as skills development; further and more in-depth experiential opportunities; and network building between the target girls/women and their mentors or potential employers.

## 9 What have been the successes and challenges of Girls' Day?

The interviews with key stakeholders and the Competence Centre's own research provide useful insight into the success and challenges of Girls' Day. The analysis reveals that, despite some difficulties, Girls' Day is a good example of a long term, national strategy designed to broaden the scope of career options considered by girls and women, particularly focussing on those aspects needed to allow full participation in the digital economy.

### 9.1 The successes

The Competence Centre describes Girls' Day as a "success story" based on a number of factors, including:

- its steady growth since its inception 2001: "from zero to 1 million" girls attending;<sup>57</sup>
- research indicating more than 90 per cent of host organisations rate the event as either 'good' or 'very good';<sup>58</sup>
- one third of girls express an interest in working in ICT after their Girls' Day experience;<sup>59</sup> and
- approximately 10 per cent of the host organisations ultimately hire one or more of the Girls' Day attendees.<sup>60</sup>

The elements that create this success can be further described as (and attributed to): obtaining political support and the win/win premise; the strength of the brand and media resonance; the network of public/private partnerships; effective coordination by the Competence Centre, and the effect on the participating workplaces in developing gender awareness.

#### 9.1.1 Obtaining support and the 'win/win' premise

Obtaining and maintaining support from key stakeholders has been critical to the success of Girls' Day. One of the interviewees from the Competence Centre noted that she was surprised by the immediate success of Girls' Day, as they had

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<sup>56</sup> Taste Mint website at: <http://www.tastemint.de/>.

<sup>57</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Girls' Day – eine Erfolgsgeschichte' (information sheet of file with author) (undated).

<sup>58</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, '14 April 2011 – Girls Day – Mädchen-Zukunftstag' (pamphlet on file with author) (undated).

<sup>59</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Girls' Day – eine Erfolgsgeschichte' published by Competence Centre (information on file with author) (undated).

<sup>60</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, '14 April 2011 – Girls Day – Mädchen-Zukunftstag' (pamphlet on file with author) (undated).

previously had limited success in receiving support for gender-focused programs. However, she noted that a number of the project partners and participants (including those in the Steering Group) were very keen to be involved from the start. She commented that the momentum created by the initial participants had had the almost immediate effect of causing other key organisations to seek to join the Girls' Day project.

The Competence Centre interviewees noted there were also historical reasons that contributed to the energy behind the creation of Girls' Day in 2001: the IT boom in Germany, the skills shortage, and the political funding and policy energy that was being directed towards Germany's digital/communications/technology future at that time.

The continued success of Girls' Day, despite its challenges, has been attributed to the 'win/win' premise of Girls' Day and how it has been organised: all parties can gain something from the experience, even if the basis for their interest in participating differs. One interviewee noted that the clarity of the vision for Girls' Day also helped the project stay on track and keep the various organisations engaged – that is, the purpose is simple enough to continue to create consensus amongst a diverse range of participants and keep the Girls' Day project scope broader and participants more varied than a normal government funded program. Accordingly, the project was not born from, and has not fallen with, a particular government.

### 9.1.2 The strength of the brand and media resonance

The success of the Girls' Day brand provides the event with both momentum and gravitas. All interviewees considered Girls' Day to be both a widely recognised brand and its purpose understood. A number of the interviewees made comments to the effect that its widespread recognition was part of what ensured that Girls' Day continued to receive funding and support. There is considerable value in the brand (the collateral for which has remained similar since its inception) and this had been achieved through relatively limited promotional funding.

An analysis of the media resonance of the 2010 Girls' Day (the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event) revealed that the event received coverage in mainstream print, TV and online media. However, as with the event itself, there was considerable variation between the states.<sup>61</sup> The Competence Centre valued its 2010 media coverage at Euro 11,700,000.<sup>62</sup>

### 9.1.3 The network of public and private partnerships

Considerable networks have been established between the partner organisations, schools, participant organisations and in the regional workgroups through the Girls' Day activities. For example, in 2002 there were 82 regional working groups and there are now over 367.<sup>63</sup> One interviewee felt this was in fact the primary success of Girl's Day, as the network provides the possibility for taking Girls' Day' to the 'next stage' and ensuring it is was 'not just a day'.

The established (and growing) relationships between the various participants were seen by a number of interviewees as an opportunity for further work towards the goal

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<sup>61</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Medienresonanz Girls' Day 2010: Überblick und Beispiele' (information sheet on file with author) (undated).

<sup>62</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Project Information' (information sheet on file with author), 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Girls' Day – eine Erfolgsgeschichte' (information sheet on of file with author) (undated).



of addressing the limited number of women in non-traditional careers. An example of this development is the Girls' Day Academy, which was initiated in 2008 by the public Agency for Employment Heilbronn<sup>64</sup> and the Association of Metal and Electrical Industry of Baden-Württemberg (Southwest Metal).<sup>65</sup> The Academy provides a template for a longer program arranged between schools and host organisations for girls in the 9th and 10<sup>th</sup> classes with an engineering and technical focus.<sup>66</sup> Interviewees noted there were plans to develop the academy model further across Germany if it continues to be successful.

A further example of the development of Girls' Day within certain regions was provided in Berlin September 2010, where a forum with discussions and workshops was arranged around the topic: 'Girls Day alone is not enough'. It included important private, academic and government speakers, and considered issues such as the anticipated effect of the career-oriented Berlin school reforms for 2010-2011 on girls taking up non-traditional careers.<sup>67</sup>

The network is arguably a key component of the success of the centralised coordination/devolved control model adopted by the Girls' Day project. Several interviewees noted that the different representative organisations contributed different skills or abilities to the success of the day. For example, the relationship between the D21 Initiative and the Federal Government was key to retaining a healthy and active connection between the Chancellor's office and the Girls' Day event. A number of the interviewees noted the importance of having the Chancellor of Germany engaged in and attending Girls' Day events – something that has occurred in both the previous and current governments. One interviewee noted that Chancellor Merkel's own success and background as a scientist made her an important role model for girls, demonstrating the breadth of careers that may develop from entering non-traditional fields.<sup>68</sup>

A number of the interviewees from the Steering Group organisation had been involved in the Girls' Day project for some time and contributed considerable personal, as well as professional, energy to the development and maintenance of the event. The Competence Centre interviewees believe this high-level political will and commitment has been essential to the success of Girls' Day. For example, the interviewee from the General Association of Employers' Associations of the Metal and Electrical Industry Association, spoke not only about his role in supporting Girls' Day and related education programs operated by the association, he also spoke of his personal interest in the subject matter as a father of two daughters.

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<sup>64</sup> Agentur für Arbeit Heilbronn.

<sup>65</sup> Des Verbands der Metall- und Elektroindustrie Baden-Württemberg e. V. - Südwestmetal.

<sup>66</sup> Bundesagentur für Arbeit and des Verbands der Metall- und Elektroindustrie Baden-Württemberg e. V. – Südwestmetal, 'Girls' Day Akademie - Ein Leitfaden' (Booklet on file with author) (undated) and BBQ - Berufliche Bildung 'BGG vor Ort – Programme – Girls' Day Akademie' at: [http://www.bbq-zukunftskurs.de/index.php?id=181&tx\\_adobbq\\_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=1255](http://www.bbq-zukunftskurs.de/index.php?id=181&tx_adobbq_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=1255).

<sup>67</sup> Life e.V., 'Der Girls' Day allein reicht uns nicht' document at: [www.life-online.de/download/girlsday/20100914\\_gd\\_tagung.pdf](http://www.life-online.de/download/girlsday/20100914_gd_tagung.pdf) (14 September 2010).

<sup>68</sup> Video of 2011 Girls' Day at Chancellor's Office at: [http://www.girls-day.de/Maedchen/Interaktiv/Girls\\_Day\\_Podcast/Girls\\_Day\\_2010\\_Auftaktveranstaltung\\_im\\_Bundeskanzleramt](http://www.girls-day.de/Maedchen/Interaktiv/Girls_Day_Podcast/Girls_Day_2010_Auftaktveranstaltung_im_Bundeskanzleramt) (in German).

#### 9.1.4 Effective coordination by the Competence Centre

Girls' Day and the network of participants is supported and fostered by the coordination work of the Competence Centre, which provides a 'one stop shop' for the girls, schools, parents and participating organisations. The research conducted for this paper did not include a review of any data relating to how effective coordination of the Competence Centre has been, however, as Girls' Day itself can be arguably assessed as being a 'success', a significant part of this success can logically be attributed to work of the Competence Centre.

As the Competence Centre is not part of government and conducts other projects, it arguably retains a degree of independence that assists in its coordination role. In addition, like the other key stakeholders, a number of its staff have been involved in the project for some time and appear to have substantial personal investment in the success of the project.

#### 9.1.5 The effect on the participating workplaces and gender awareness

The Competence Centre research reveals that repeated participation by a host organisation in Girls' Day can have a positive effect on organisational culture and internal awareness of equality issues.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, girls report a much higher likelihood of considering a career at the host organisation the more often these host organisations have participated in Girls' Day; which may indicate that the programs improve over time in terms of engaging students and that the organisations themselves develop a clearer understanding on how to effectively communicate with girls.<sup>70</sup> Participation in Girls' Day may also improve an organisation's public image and demonstrate a sensitivity to gender issues in the workplace, which may in turn attract female employees.

One interviewee noted that understanding that girls and women may need to be approached differently was an important part of the Girls' Day program delivery. The interviewee said that based on her experience, girls often lacked the confidence to consider careers in these sectors and that boys seemed to be more confident at both having a go at work experience opportunities and in considering further study based in these fields based on their academic results. A number of the interviewees also mentioned they believed girls and boys became engaged in MINT careers in different ways, and that girls reacted differently in work-experience environments, especially when the activities related to technical or technology matters.

One interviewee noted that it was important to have a suitable advocate for Girls' Day in participating organisations, and that ideally arrangements for the day not be left to (predominantly female) assistants. The interviewee commented that Girls' Day could be difficult run in some male-dominated workplaces, however, they and other interviewees noted that by running a Girls' Day event, gender equality and equity related issues could be raised and progressed in a workplace. One interviewee noted that diversity, both gender and ethnicity, was not something that was common in highly professional careers in Germany and that Girls' Day was one part a strategy needed to address this imbalance.

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<sup>69</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Project Information' (Information sheet on file with author), 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Zukunft gestalten – Mit dem Girls' Day zu Ausbildung und Studium' (booklet on file with author), (2011).

## 9.2 The challenges:

The key challenges to Girls' Day were identified as: obtaining funding and maintaining continual growth; demonstrating results expected by certain parties; ensuing quality and consistency of Girls' Day events across Germany; and the concerns regarding the introduction of a Boys' Day in 2011. These are discussed below, along with some of the strategies adopted by the Girls' Day organisers to deal with these challenges.

### 9.2.1 Funding and continual growth

Funding from the Federal Government and EU Social Fund is provided on a triennial basis. Interviewees noted that while it was possible to obtain substantial in-kind support and smaller individual project funding from the various project partners, adequate alternative financial support was difficult to obtain from any other source but the current funders. The evaluations program was considered an important part of securing ongoing funding and acquitting past funding.

Interviewees noted that the Girls' Day project had developed overtime, not only as a result of natural project evolution, but also as part of a conscious effort demonstrate the project could grow and develop, which was seen as an important factor in securing further funding. Accordingly, although funding cycles are arguably too short to demonstrate long term changes of the type expected by the project, it may also operate as an incentive to ensure the project remains dynamic and progresses. One interviewee noted that the Girls' Day project has sought to expand its reach to ensure that difficulties experienced by non-German speaking background girls in choosing MINT careers was considered, along with access to Girls' Day by disabled students.

Another challenge in securing the growth of Girls' Day is to encourage more small to medium size businesses to participate. One interviewee stated that in her opinion, larger organisations were generally better at preparing for Girls' Day events, and that trade-based businesses remained the hardest to engage in Girls' Day.

### 9.2.2 Demonstrating expected results

Some interviewees felt there was pressure to demonstrate certain results: specifically, that the numbers of women entering non-traditional careers has increased since the inception of Girls' Day. However, there has not been a documented statistically significant increase in the number of women entering MINT professions. A number of interviewees explained why they did not think this was the correct measure of success nor that such results could be achieved by Girls' Day alone. These included factors such as:

- the number of girls who have attended Girls' Day: that is, although a million girls have attended the program over 10 years, there has only been a maximum of 137,489 girls attending in one year;<sup>71</sup>
- the length of the Girls' Day project: that is, a significant proportion of those girls who have attended Girls' Day may still be in school; and
- the scope of the program: that is, that while Girls' Day played an important role in broadening the perceived career options for girls and women, it was an opportunity that then needed to be developed further by schools, parents, host organisations and the girls themselves.

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<sup>71</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Girls' Day – eine Erfolgsgeschichte' (information sheet on of file with author) (undated).

The Competence Centre has also sought to re-frame the way success is measured, not only by highlighting the successes (as noted above) but also by using the methodology of story telling to demonstrated the effect of Girls' Day on certain girls. For example, it has provided the personal stories of women who now study in non-traditional careers, such as ICT and technology-based careers, who provide testimony that their Girl's Day experience was an important factor in their career choice.<sup>72</sup>

One interviewee said that it was also important to ensure that the quality of programs was the focus and not quantity. While the interviewee was keen to see Girls' Day grow further (and noted that only a small number of the possible attendees went each year), it was important that the program remained optional for the girls, as this would ensure a better dynamic between the attendees and hosts.

### 9.2.3 Quality and consistency across the program across Germany

The Competence Centre interviewees noted that as the program was decentralised in terms of what each host offered as an event and how each regional work group arranged itself, there was a significant degree of variation between how the event operates in each of the host organisation and in each of the states. However, the Competence Centre was neither established (nor does it have the capacity) to ensure a uniformity of Girls' Day event standard.

The Competence Centre interviewees said they attempted to address complaints or negative feedback from the girls by engaging with the host organisations and providing them with support and constructive feedback. Accordingly, the evaluation process is an important part of identifying where there may be issues with a host organisation.

### 9.2.4 Boys' Day

The introduction of Boys' Day in 2011, after considerable preparation and research by the Competence Centre, has been a significant political challenge, one which has been hotly debated by the Girls' Day participants and networks.

Boys' Day is part of a broader project called 'A New Way for Boys', which has been operating since 2005 to assist boys/young men in developing broader career options, provide gender sensitive role models and create nation-wide network for boys.<sup>73</sup> Boys' Day runs on the same day as Girls' Day and provides boys with an opportunity to experience a career in which men are under-represented, such as child care, education, care and health services.<sup>74</sup> Boys who seek to attend Girls' Day events are advised that only girls are entitled to attend, although it was noted that individual organisation may circumvent this rule if they have not registered their event with the Competence Centre.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, 'Zukunft gestalten – Mit dem Girls' Day zu Ausbildung und Studium' (booklet on file with author), (2011); and Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancegleichheit, 'Girls@Work – Mit dem Girls' Day zu Ausbildung oder Studium' (Information sheet on file with author), (2011).

<sup>73</sup> Neue Weg für Jungs website at: <http://www.neue-wege-fuer-jungs.de/Neue-Wege-fuer-Jungs/Neue-Wege-fuer-Jungs>.

<sup>74</sup> Kompetenzzentrum, '1<sup>st</sup> Bundesweiter Jugend-Zukunftstag – Boys' Day' (pamphlet on file with author), (2010).

<sup>75</sup> Source: Interviewees from the Competence Centre.

Most interviewees noted that Boys' Day had raised some concerns in some participants in the established Girls' Day network. Interviewees noted there was concern that:

- it may diminish the focus of Girls' Day, that is, the messaging regarding the low numbers of women in MINT careers and the consequential effects on society and the economy;
- it will ultimately result in host organisations inviting boys to Girls' Day events;
- it may fail to address the key issues facing boys in relation to both their further education/career issues and progressive/modern role models for young men; and
- the rationale of what was being 'offered' to girls (such as good wage and career prospects) was not offered to men in traditionally female-dominated careers.

The Competence Centre interviewees were aware of the concerns in relation to Boys' Day, however, they consider Boys' Day (in addition to being an important project for boys) is a key part of ensuring that Girls' Day remains vital and retains political and financial support. Those involved in the coordination were keen to ensure the two events, despite their similar branding/names were clearly distinguished in purpose and execution. To that end, while the events have similar branding, they function from two different websites and materials for parents, schools and host organisations relating to each event are kept separate.

One interviewee noted that a common complaint from parents was that their sons were interested in the MINT careers and they wanted their sons to have the opportunity to attend the host organisations also. The interviewee noted that it was important for the messaging to remain: "yes, we understand, but that needs to occur on the other 364 days of the year". Another interviewee thought Boys' Day, despite the concerns raised above, provided a good solution to the question 'what should schools do when the girls leave for Girls' Day'.

## 10 Girls' Day in Australia?

There are a number of historical, political, structural and cultural factors that led to the cumulative success of Girls' Day in Germany. However, Girls' Day is based on a model (centralised coordination, devolved detailed organisation, public/private partnerships) that could compliment Australian education and training systems.

The critical issue in an Australian environment would be obtaining political support for a girls only event from the key organisations, such as government, unions, employer bodies, major companies, government and community organisations. The German experience confirms that it is important to have champions of the strategy within these organisations, who are able to develop the requisite internal political and practical support.

An additional complication may be that non-gender specific organisations and networks operating at a national level may consider an overarching gender-focused strategy to be a threat to their existing activities. It is possible that suggesting a Girls' Day and a Boys' Day from inception may help with obtaining political support for gender-focused programs, however, the differing rationales for the two events (especially from an economic perspective) may confuse messaging to potential supporters and participants.

Girls' Day arguably offers a good value proposition in terms of building the social networks and awareness that is required to effect change in the number of women entering MINT careers. As outlined above in the 'Background' section, there is expertise in Australia in both developing and delivering gender-focused programs designed to engage girls and women in MINT careers. This expertise could be utilised in advocating for, and then implementing, a national strategy like Girls' Day in Australia.

It is well established that there are significant economic and social benefits to be gained in having women enter MINT careers, such as an increase in overall economic productivity.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, it is important to ensure women are not marginalised from key sectors of our society and economy as activities occurring in the digital economy increase. This will require a greater number of women to have ICT and advanced digital literacy skills. In these circumstances, it is worth considering a long term, national, gender-focused approach to addressing this issue, of which an event like Girls' Day could be a valuable part.

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<sup>76</sup> Goldman Sachs JBWere, 'Australia's Hidden Resource: The Economic Case For Increasing Female Participation', (2009).

## 11 Attachment 1: Details of interviewees

<b>English Organisation Name</b>	<b>German Organisation Name</b>	<b>Interviewee Name</b>	<b>Position title (English)</b>
<b>Competence Centre for Technology-Diversity-Equal Chances</b>	Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit	Doro-Thea Chwalek,	Project Leader for Girls' Day, Boys' Day and New Way for Boys
		Elisabeth Schöppner,	Senior Consultant Project Leader for Girls' Day
		Sabine Mellies,	Managing Director
		Dr Ulrike Struwe,	Project Developer for the National Pact for MINT Careers
<b>Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth Employment</b>	Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend Arbeit	Andrea Köhnen,	Head of Equal Opportunity Policies for Boys and Men
<b>German Trade Union Confederation – Federal Executive</b>	Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund – Bundesvorstand	Jenny Huschke	Officer for Equal Opportunity and Women's Policy
<b>General Association of Employers' Associations of the Metal and Electrical Industry Association</b>	Gesamtverband der Arbeitgeberverbände der Metall- und Elektro-Industrie e.V.	Wolfgang Gollub	Project Leader/Public Relations/Trainee Protection
<b>Initiative D21 e.V.</b>	Initiative D21 e.V.	Barbara Zimmers,	CEO
<b>Life e.V Education, Environment and Equal Opportunity</b>	LIFE e.V Bildung, Umwelt, Chancengleichheit	Almut Borggreffe	Coordinator for Girls' Day in Berlin
<b>Cisco Systems</b>	Cisco Systems	Carsten Johnson	Program Manager - Cisco Networking Academy