

The Promotion of Young Talent and Parity in Focus

A joint project by the Women of the
VBE and the Young VBE on behalf of
the VBE National Executive Board



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By Means of Introduction

In a round of talks, the three driving forces behind this brochure – the VBE national president, Udo Beckmann, the spokesperson for the Women of the VBE, Tanja Küsgens, and the spokesperson for the Young VBE, Susann Meyer – explain what drives them, what challenges they see, and why they are jointly authoring this publication.

“We don’t want to impose rigid rules!”

Social change cannot be stopped. But the tried and tested structures do not always leave enough room for everyone. In order for this to change, the VBE association, together with the women in the VBE and the Young VBE, present recommendations for promoting the next generation of association members, and for promoting diversity in board committees and association work. In this interview they explain why.

Mr Beckmann, how did this publication come about?

Udo Beckmann (UB): “Some time ago, the women in the VBE drew up a proposal to achieve parity, i.e. that half of the members of the executive committees of the dbb deutscher beamtenbund und tarifunion should be made up of men, and half of women. The driving force behind this was our esteemed colleague Jutta Endrusch, long-time national spokesperson for women in the VBE. We owe her a debt of gratitude for always campaigning with all of her might for issues of this kind.

I find parity self-evidently worth supporting, but I also see that it poses a challenge. Let’s take the VBE National Executive Board. As of March 2022, four out of the 16 state chairpersons are women. I, in the role of national

chairperson, am not able to alter this ratio. If attaining parity were an order, my hands would be tied. That said, the state associations can themselves work towards a change through various measures.”

Ms Küsgens, does this mean that all VBE state associations must now introduce a quota?

Tanja Küsgens (TK): “In fact, no! We don’t want to impose rigid rules, but rather travel along with social upswings. Many people want to get involved, but are being prevented from doing so by existing structures. With this publication, we are presenting recommendations, not orders. After taking stock of the situation, the state associations can themselves decide which measures might suit them – and, of course, whatever they themselves might develop and imple-

ment. Our goal must be that everyone who is a member of the association also feels represented.”

Ms Meyer, you are a woman, you are young, and you sit on the National Executive Committee. That proves that everyone can be represented in the VBE, doesn’t it?

Susann Meyer (SM): “Of course one may see things that way. But this ought not obscure the fact that many women ‘slip away’ in the prime of their lives: It comes to pass for chairpersons of the Young VBE that in their respective state associations work, family and household no longer leave enough room for travel to a board meeting when it is halfway across the state. The chairmanship is then ‘voluntarily’ given up. But I think it is the responsibility of all of us to think about how board work can be made compatible with a person’s other duties.”



Tanja Küsgens,
national spokesperson of the VBE
Women’s Representative Council

TK: “Exactly! Compatibility is not just an empty phrase. There is a very concrete idea behind it: become a mother but remain a person. Of course, there are also

women who simply don’t want to do committee work, but prefer to spend time with their children. That’s okay too. But there are also enough mothers for whom the times of some board meetings make participation impossible. We want to sensitise people to such hurdles.”

Mr Beckmann, what is the target for the state associations?

UB: “First and foremost, to deal with the issue and to see where things can be improved at the individual level. That’s why I think it’s very good that in recent months and years there has been repeated discussion about representation and parity in the state associations, even if we do not always agree. There have been heated but also constructive debates in the meetings of the national executive. It is important that one thing remains clear: that we are all building on a solid democratic foundation, and that we have the requirement of letting members know they can feel represented.”

Is that only possible if half of the board seats are taken up by women?

UB: “I believe that during the past years and decades we have proven that the VBE and the board members at the state- and national levels have had their ears on the pulse of our changing times and represent the interests of all. The fact that the board’s outlook on some issues will change as more



Udo Beckmann,
National Chairman of the Association
for Education and Training (VBE)

women and young members begin to sit on the board is an open secret.

It is good for diversity of thought and opinions – and thus for democratic thinking generally – when the people who are discussing with one another are themselves diverse.”

Diversity is the slogan. Don't we in fact have to talk about categories other than gender and age?

SM: “I think the bottom line is not to cover every ‘category’ to the greatest possible extent, but to create structures that make it possible that everyone who wishes to participate may do so. In our work in the Young VBE, we have had very good experiences with digital cooperation. One person can work on a document at 4 p.m., the other at 10 p.m. We also keep the meetings short and in a way that suits most people. If a time frame is announced beforehand, we stick to it. If topics remain undiscussed, they can be discussed at another time. Compatibility thrives on plannability!”

But isn't it sometimes simply necessary to hold a board meeting in person, and indeed after school hours?

TK: “Sure. And we in the VBE can't accommodate everything that is sub-optimal at home by means of changing structures. We won't help single parents, or women whose husbands don't do their share of the housework by having meetings start at a different time. Female role models, such as mentors from the management level, can show how they have managed, as an example for others. This can be a great motivator for a person, because it makes it possible for one to imagine participating oneself.”

SM: “And the goal here is not for all women who join the VBE to get onto the board. The aim must rather be for them to have the power to do so. And the structures which we have in places make that difficult. I would like to see a much greater understanding that, as Udo Beckmann said, it helps democratic thinking if as many different people as possible can sit at the table. And the table doesn't have to be the board table, but can simply be the table at the workshop, in the project group or at lunch.”

Ms. Küsgens, Ms. Meyer, why don't you tell us about your experiences? What is the feedback from the members of your cross-sectional representations? Do they feel adequately represented?

TK: “Well, there is certainly still room for improvement! The issues that women bring to the board's work don't always find an open ear with everyone! For example, it is

argued that all people in primary schools are paid equally badly, regardless of gender. But if 90 per cent of the primary school staff are female, we can and must speak of structural discrimination. That's where we have to look.”

SM: “Yes, I can only support that sentiment. Young VBE members are ridiculed because of their impatience. I am naturally not as accomplished as my colleagues who will soon have been in the teaching profession for as long as I have been alive. But this youthful potential ought to be utilized – in the school as well as on the board. The innovative ideas that the young can bring in should be taken a lot more seriously.”

Mr. Beckmann, isn't that a good argument: securing the future of the union?

UB: “Yes, I think there is no better one. That's why we have always supported the work of the Young VBE. I myself am a product of the Young VBE from the 1980s. This publication is also something of a leaving present. In December, I will not be running for national chair again. It is particularly important to me that the association continues to develop in the spirit of the times. It can only

enrich the association to include everyone's voices, to create opportunities to involve a diversity of individuals in the work of the Board and the Association. I would therefore be very pleased if the state associations read our recommendations carefully and consider implementing them.”



Susann Meyer,
national spokesperson
of the Young VBE

The Current Status of Representation in the State Executive Committees

We asked the state associations: What does the distribution of membership look like? How many women and how many young people are active on the board? And what measures are taken to promote participation within these groups? The subsequent analysis was the basis of discussions in the national executive committee and in cross-sectional representations. In the following section we present the results in brief.

Women

The 2021 survey showed that the proportion of women within the membership is clearly predominant – in line with the proportion of employees among pedagogical professionals. It is around 70 to 80 per cent. However, this also means that the degree of organisation (at least in the VBE state associations) among female employees is somewhat lower than among male employees.

At that time, the executive board of three state associations reflected the gender balance of the membership. In a total of eight state associations there was parity in the composition of the board. That means that there were significantly fewer women on the executive boards of half of the state associations than their membership share in the state associations would predict, and even a half-filling of the executive board positions could not be implemented across the board. The more measures for the advancement of women are implemented within a state association, the more likely it is that there are women in board positions. However, due to the paucity of data, it is not clear whether this is a situation of correlation or causation. It is possible that women feel addressed by such measures. It is equally possible that the women on the board of directors are pleading for measures to be

taken. Here it remains unclear how strongly the impact of the measures have been felt.

The measures on offer include further training for personal and professional development, such as moderation training and self-management, but also service law. The involvement of women on the board is also favoured by “smaller” structures, as we see in city states. And last but not least, a higher proportion of women can be observed in eastern states.

The women in the VBE would like to see topics that affect women in particular, such as maternity leave, parental leave and caring for dependants. There is an equal understanding that these topics not only affect women, but all family members in an increasingly open society with varying family models. Intensive engagement with these issues and a wide range of counselling services help to create a trade union representative for all teachers.

Young Workers

Under-40s generally make up about a quarter to a third of the membership. However, there is wide variation between state unions, ranging from 1.5 to 61 per cent. There is a strong correlation of membership numbers with non-contribution.

That said, the amount of measures implemented does not always correlate with membership numbers. Here the question must be asked about the evaluation of the measures, which should lead to an assessment of efficiency and effectiveness. The state associations would be well advised to support each other so that measures that work well do not have to be “reinvented” in every association.

Young teachers and trainee teachers are not represented on all boards. However, in some cases they are invited to board meetings and participate as guests without voting rights and can thus contribute their concerns and perspectives. However, there is a great desire among the members of the Young VBE to be involved in all committees with voting rights in order to guarantee representation of the opinion of younger people.

In almost all state associations, explicit measures are taken to recruit young teachers, students and persons in the traineeship.

Measures which are particularly popular:

- Advertising/booths at universities/teaching colleges,
- Reduction of membership fees (in some cases exemption from fees),
- personal talks on the sidelines of events,
- In-service training (at a personal level, but also law etc.),
- young teachers’ days,
- extra magazines/newsletters,
- Staff council places.

However, this can only be implemented, at least to the fullest extent, if corresponding resources are available in the offices to support it.

Personal Experience

The state chairpersons were asked what was most helpful when taking over the role of chairperson. The most frequently mentioned aspect was having a good relationship with the previous chairperson. On the one hand, this helps one to acquire tips and tricks and to get involved in existing networks, and on the other hand, this helps one find support and contacts for beyond the term of office. This ensures a smooth transition and alleviates fears of not being able to fulfil the task in the same way, especially after long terms of office. In addition, it was pointed out that a network should already exist, also in other areas, for example parties, a business association or local clubs.

Last but not least, the answers made it clear that the election to the chairmanship was preceded by a long period of association and board work. It takes a lot of resources, a high level of commitment and also the willingness not to take on other areas of life with the same intensity. The women of the VBE conveyed their experience that the mothers among them would not have the corresponding capacities. It is questionable whether the amount of preparatory work that is currently normal for taking over the role of chairperson can be expected of

everyone equally. In workshops with the women of the VBE, it was worked out that competence-based assumption of board positions should also be an option. This could specifically promote the commitment of individuals who do not yet have strong networks but who, for example, have previous experience in the areas of social media, editing, contact with politics or similar.

What Can We Learn From This?

There are more women than men in the association's membership. There is also a high variation in the proportion of younger people in the membership between the state associations.

Even if the picture is not uniform, it can be said that women do not participate equally to men in board work in most state associations. They are clearly less represented on the boards, especially given their share in the membership. The picture is similar for the younger members. They are seldom involved in the boards and in some cases have no voting rights. It is the declared wish of the members of the Young VBE that their participation in the board be established in all state associations.

Measures for the advancement of women are taken less often than for the advancement of men. At the same time, it is obvious that the amount of measures only correlates with the number of members to a limited extent. An evaluation of the measures is therefore advisable. Networking among the state associations could also be helpful so that experiences can be shared.

The central finding of the discussions with the women of the VBE and the Young VBE

was that there is a great desire for better involvement in the work of the board, but at the same time they point to limited capacities. With the increasing tasks in the teaching profession, there is less time for building networks, years spent working upwards and in parallel honorary offices. This applies equally to all teachers. The task profile of a modern board should be redesigned accordingly.

Possible Measures

In the state associations there are different levels of participation of younger people and women on the boards. In order to achieve an optimal representation of all relevant groups, various measures can be implemented. These have been discussed with both the women's representation and the Young VBE. The proposals that have the highest relevance in their judgement are explained below. In anticipation of counter-arguments, in each case the measure is dealt with alongside an anticipated criticism – with corresponding response.

Levels of Change

There are different approaches to recruiting members, involving them in active association work and ultimately encouraging them to take up positions within the association and the board.

It is essential to make the transition between recruiting members and empowering them to take on roles within the association. This can quickly become a balancing act, because the tasks to be managed in the teaching profession are constantly increasing. On the other hand, it is extremely important for the local association to have committed members. This dichotomy alone, but also the situation in society as a whole and not least the desire to implement representation in the association, creates pressure to think about the composition of the board and the assumption of tasks in it, at least in the medium term. Those who recruit new members today should be able to recognise competences, promote them and retain people in the long term - even if the family phase is coming up or the job demands a lot.

On the one hand, it is necessary to create structures that are equally appealing and conducive to all people. On the other hand, the competences of the individuals must be

promoted. Personal development should be supported where there are still uncertainties - and where there are already strengths. And last but not least, members (and those who want to become members) must be met where they are. As an association, it is therefore essential to know the target group well, to deal with relevant content and to present this in an appealing way.

Excursus: A Look at the Economy

Companies have recognised for some years that the promotion of women in particular offers great potential. For a long time, they were not equally included in promotions. Working part-time, caring for children or relatives and the (supposedly) lower readiness for promotion blocked women's way to the top for a long time. But two developments are favouring a rethink. On the one hand, it is becoming clear that all people in a company bring qualities to the table and therefore different types should take on leadership responsibilities. And secondly, the image of work is changing. For newcomers to the profession, finding a work-life balance is more important than salary and career prospects.

It is therefore necessary to make management positions so attractive that it is worth taking on the responsibility. This includes, for example, more flexible working hours, the sharing of leadership responsibilities and programmes that support people in being able to take on leadership tasks. Mentoring programmes are often used to support women in particular as they arrive at the new company and build their confidence and skills. In addition, some larger companies have targets regarding the proportion of women. By 2025, Deutsche Post wants to fill 30 per cent of upper- and middle-management positions with women¹; CocaCola Germany even aims for a 40 per cent of female-held management positions².

¹) <https://initiative-chefsache.de/deutsche-post-dhl-group-schaltet-bei-der-chancengerechtigkeit-einen-gang-hoerher/> (accessed 22.10.2022)

²) <https://www.cocacolaep.com/de/stories/frauen-fuer-vielfalt/> (accessed 22.10.2022)

Measures at the Structural Level

(1) Integration Into the Work of the Executive Board

Both the members of the Women's Representation and the Young VBE agree that it is essential for their work and the perception of it to be firmly anchored in the board. There are two options. Either in accordance with statutes with a seat and a vote, or co-opted. The advantage of the first option is that it is binding; the advantage of the second option is that it can be implemented at very short notice. Sometimes it is also practised to inform the representatives only about the results of board meetings. This is criticised by both organizations as completely inadequate.

Why?

Boards through which not all people feel represented can send an unwanted signal to the membership. In addition, people who are actively involved in the association may not feel sufficiently heard. Even if, for example, members of the Young VBE are invited as guests, the lack of voting rights can still lead to resentment.

What to do?

When filling positions, care can be taken to recruit people who are as diverse as possible to work on the board. It can be helpful to give priority to people with sought-after skills over people who have been on the board for some time. For example, the person in charge of communications should have experience in social media. In addition, it should be discussed whether the state spokespersons of the cross-sectional representations can be born members of the executive board – i.e. permanent members according to the statutes.

Yes, but... the size of the executive board in the state associations is oriented towards their tasks and should be kept as appropriately small/large as possible in the interests of the membership.

→ An appropriately large state executive board should nevertheless sufficiently represent and include all member groups and give them voting rights.

→ There are situations in which long-standing board members are assigned tasks that require a lengthy period of fa-

miliarisation. It is questionable why it is not decided the other way round: If it is known which competences are needed in the next legislature, appropriate persons should be sought.

Yes, but... there are not enough different people standing for election.

→ Standing for election must be understood as the end point of a whole series of personal and professional decisions. If you want diversity to reach the board, you have to recruit members on this basis, activate them, keep them active and accompany them until the election can take place (see also further measures).

Yes, but... we don't want to introduce a quota.

→ Precisely because we do not want to introduce quotas, now is the time to rethink executive work and the composition of state executive committees. If we can make board work attractive, make it accessible to as many different people as possible and ensure compatibility with professional and other commitments, the likelihood that diverse boards can be achieved without quotas increases.

Yes, but... the existing statutes make it impossible to have a diverse state executive committee, because this automatically

stems from district association chairpersons, for instance – and these are not diverse either.

→ It is the task of all subdivisions of the association to create an awareness that as many members as possible can regard themselves as well-represented on the board. Not just the state association, but also the district associations may have to reorganise themselves and take specific measures to ensure that a wide variety of people take on tasks on the board.

And, of course, diversity does not start with the executive board, but must already be relevant in the recruitment and empowerment of members. The more this is practised, the more likely it is that something will change in the composition of those engaged with board work.

(2) Harnessing the Power of Online Meetings

As much as the Corona crisis was negative, it also directly demonstrated the potential of online meetings.

Why?

Although online meetings cannot completely replace face-to-face meetings, they offer good opportunities to involve groups of people who have not always been able to attend meetings in person.

What to do?

It is not necessary to hold all conferences online, but rather, for instance, every second one. The offer of hybrid participation can also be taken up much better by people in the family phase, rather than facing a two hours' drive there and back.

Yes, but... Meetings in presence are simply nicer. There is a direct exchange and communication cannot be misunderstood so quickly.

→ It is true that face-to-face meetings have many advantages. Nevertheless, it must be weighed up whether the advantages of online communication are relevant enough to reorganise accordingly. Less travel, better integration into daily routines, more efficient meeting management (as there are usually no side conversations) and the now high technical standards (anonymous online voting, good transmission quality, low costs) are just a few one can mention.

(3) Adapting Meeting Structures

The way board meetings are usually scheduled, it is inconceivable to attend without taking time off to look after family members or relatives in need of care. It is then much more difficult to organise attendance at meetings.

Why?

If you look at the distribution of care work (this includes in particular caring for and looking after one's own children and relatives), it is still largely done by women. With long meeting times and meetings taking place in the afternoon, board work becomes unattractive for this group of potentially committed people. An additional danger lurks here: previously committed people can no longer take on board work when they enter the family phase of life.

What can be done?

It is important to find the best intersection of meeting times for each newly constituted board. It can be optimal to always meet at the same time on the same day, because the meetings can then be well planned. But it is also possible to schedule larger meetings on fixed days and meet ad hoc in between – gladly online.

Yes, but... we have always met on Friday at 2 p.m. (or other fixed time).

→ There should be as much openness as possible when sounding out the times of meetings. Just because meetings were also held at a certain time in the final and penultimate legislative periods, this does not have to continue to apply – especially if one wants to attract other people to board work. People who have to take care of their

children during the day one might win over for board work if meetings start online at 8 p.m. But maybe also with meetings at 1 p.m. if the children or relatives can be looked after by others.

Yes, but... it is impossible to estimate in advance how long the meetings will last and we always have a lot planned.

→ Especially for people who take on care work, it is essential to have an estimate of how long a meeting (or taking on a task) will take from the outset. Therefore, an efficient management of the meeting should be a requirement for everyone, but especially for the chair of the meeting. If topics cannot be dealt with in the time previously allocated for them, meetings must not be extended arbitrarily. This makes board work unattractive.

(4) Rotating the Chairing of Meetings

At the intersection between the structural and personal levels is the promotion of the competence of individuals to chair meetings.

Why?

Those who chair meetings have a higher responsibility towards their outcome. Also, a rotating leadership promotes the personal development of individuals. Last but not

least, rotation offers the opportunity to better present different perspectives and to incorporate them into the decision-making process.

What to do?

The chair of the meeting is often the chair of the state executive committee. Equally, it can be taken on by any member on the board on a rotating basis.

Yes, but... many people don't want to do it.

→ Chairing a meeting can be very challenging for certain people. Speaking in front of others, leading the meeting, summarising arguments or leading votes is not an equally simple and familiar challenge for everyone. On the other hand, merely taking on this task can help one to develop. If there are major concerns, moderation training can also help.

Yes, but... that means more effort for the individual.

→ It is true that chairing a meeting requires working in advance, which not everyone does equally well, thoroughly or willingly. However, since there are more than five people on the average board and they usually meet once a month, one probably chairs a meeting no more than twice a year, and so the personal effort required is limited in nature.

(5) Including Childcare in Meeting Allowances

A participant at the VBE women's representative conference reported that she spends all her meeting allowance plus other relevant parts of her salary on childcare to attend meetings and conferences. Including this expense in the allocation of meeting allowances could reach whole new circles of committed people.

Why?

More and more teachers can "only" pursue their profession part-time due to the increased demands. In addition, there are many single parents. People in relationships often look for like-minded people, so that two committed people have to take care of children, relatives and the household: a big task.

What can be done?

An additional bonus could be added to the attendance fee as an incentive to have children or family members who need care looked after by others in order to be able to do board work during this time. If, for financial reasons, this is not to be given to all persons on the board, primarily single parents or persons who can credibly show that care work must be externalised can be favoured.

A second variant is to provide on-site childcare. On the one hand, this can be done via an external caregiver who takes over the care of the board members' children for the time of the meeting. On the other hand, a family carer (partner, grandparent) can be arranged in such a way that their costs (e.g. double instead of single room, travel costs) are fully or at least proportionately covered by the association.

Yes, but... the financial regulations must be changed for this.

→ A corresponding amendment must of course be discussed at the ordinary general meetings.

Measures at the Personal Level

(1) Being a Role Model/ Self-promoting – Encouraging Discussion

If you want to show how it can be done, you should set the best example. People who manage to organise their voluntary work alongside their job (and other commitments) should therefore pool their experiences and pass them on.

Why?

People who are new to an association or who (now) want to actively get involved rarely know where to start. It is therefore important to meet people where they are: What skills does someone have? Which working groups already exist? In which structures can people get involved? But the interpersonal aspect should not be forgotten either. If you get a person to help you, it is easier to get involved in existing circles than to have to navigate the thicket of information and relationships alone.

What to do?

Whether in formal or informal structures: the exchange between new members and

those who have been involved for a long time, between those in office and those (still) without, should definitely be forced. Depending on the level of organisation, there are, for example, the following possibilities:

- spontaneous informal exchange,
- arranged informal exchange,
- arranged "official" exchange (new member meetings),
- institutionalised exchange (for example, young people's circles, but also mentoring programmes).

Yes, but... we already do that in our association. We just don't call it "mentoring".

→ If you do it this way, you should definitely make it transparent. Maybe it keeps one or the other from joining the association or becoming actively involved because it's unclear what will happen next. If it is immediately stated in the membership benefits that an introduction of new members is planned within the framework of mentoring tandems, that can be a clear plus point.

Yes, but... anyone with a question can get in touch. A contact person is usually appointed at the time of joining.
 → Experience shows that in case of urgent questions and membership matters, new members certainly do contact membership officers. But at the same time, this is not an activating process. It is better to offer information directly and strive for integration into the association.

Yes, but... I did it that way.
 → Inferring others from one's personal career can make one, if not blind, then less receptive to the challenges of others. Not all people are equally self-confident, sure of their path or equal within the family. Being shown how it can work can help. A great service of the association is to take others by the hand – and thus also a point against the competition.

Yes, but... we don't have the resources for mentoring.
 → However it is named, mentoring can also mean a very small structure: Each person on the board is "responsible" for a new person joining. This can include everything from drinking coffee to sitting in on the board, from attending a workshop together to preparing one of your own – and can be as big, or small; as elaborate (or simple) as it needs to be.

Yes, but... we are very transparent about the possibilities for engagement.
 → Reading information on a website and understanding it and having it explained by someone is always a different experience.. In addition, personal contact can help build loyalty to the board and the structures.

Last but not least, board work and involvement in associations involves not only formal processes, but also a lot of knowledge about relationships and networks within the association. And that is certainly not on the internet.

(2) Building Networks for Specific Groups

→ In the VBE there are already networks for women and for committed young people: the Women of the VBE and the Young VBE. Both cross-sectional representations report very positive effects of exchanges in this protected space. It should therefore always be ensured that the possibility of exchange continues to be actively promoted and that the solutions developed there are incorporated into the board's work.

Yes, but... that is discriminatory.
 → Every now and then the discussion is raised as to why this protected space is needed. At this point, a discussion with the members of these groups is recommended.

What is certain: protected spaces are important for women and younger committed people to address certain interests and challenges of women and young teachers and to create customised solutions without an immediate evaluation from the outside. But they are not the only ones for whom these spaces are important.

In the future, it will become clear to what extent the interests of teachers with a migrant background, for example, should also be represented in groups. What is certain is that the better existing boards perceive the interests of all and are made up of diverse members, the more likely it is that diverse groups will feel represented.

Measures at the Level of Content

(1) Targeting Group Orientation of Content on Offer

Providing information, offering relevant workshops or producing publications are resource-intensive. Nevertheless, as many topics as possible should be dealt with, prepared and offered to the membership.

Why?

Representation does not start with seeing someone with similar characteristics on the board (although this can have a positive effect). Especially in membership recruitment, it is essential to be able to offer all interested parties content that is relevant to their lives and generates added value for them: for parents-to-be this means information on parental leave and allowances, for teachers just starting out it is know-how on leading learning groups, for older people it is advice on pensions.

What to do?

When offering content, attention should be paid to a variety of topics.

Yes, but... our membership is not that diverse/does not ask for content that targets diversity.

→ But maybe the membership would be more diverse if appropriate content was offered. Compared to other trade unions and teachers' associations, there is still room for improvement in most of the state associations of the Association for Education and Training when looking at certain groups of people. In order for this not to remain the case, opportunities are needed for these people (if one wants to win them as members).

Yes, but... the processing of so many topics is too resource-intensive. The cost is not worth it for the benefit.

→ The great thing about the VBE is the co-operation between the state associations. It is not necessary for every state association to prepare information from scratch. It is often worthwhile to look across the state border to see where information is already available – or where a topic can be worked on together. Where law comes into play, the

respective state law must of course be taken into account. As a rule, however, they are not fundamentally different.

Yes, but... one can't keep this information up to date.

→ Not all information has to be prepared, printed and distributed as a brochure. Often, it is enough to prepare the information on the website. Keeping it up to date is an ongoing task for which there should be responsibilities on the board. A knowledge database, such as a wiki, supports updating.

In keeping with the times, QR codes leading to a website rather than publications should be displayed at events.

(2) Getting to Know the Association's Structures, Acquiring Know-How

Confidence in one's own abilities, knowledge of the association's structures and the necessary contacts within the association are essential for commitment, especially with regard to board work. It must be in the board's own interest to promote this.

Why?

Only those who know their way around and have sufficient competences can contribute to the board.

What can be done?

Structural knowledge, but also opportunities for personal development can be provided in different degrees of institutionalisation. This ranges from a one-off discussion, to a multi-part workshop, to so-called "young people's circles", as established in the state associations of Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia.

Yes, but... who is supposed to offer that?

→ Here, too, it is important to exchange information among the state associations: Has a board member already had good experiences with a speaker? Can the lawyer of one state association also give tips to the other? Can a person from the Executive Board speak well himself?

Especially those who are planning to create a structure that will retain members in the long term can benefit from the experiences of North Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria. The young people's circles are primarily aimed at younger members and are intended to convey both explicit and implicit knowledge about the association.

Yes, but... who is going to pay for that?

→ It is a fallacy to think that the absence of opportunities on offer means an absence of costs. On the contrary, it is very likely

that potential members will tend to turn to where they get the greatest added value and are integrated into the structure of the association in the best possible way. Not offering opportunities to get to know the structures and acquire personal skills is therefore cheaper, but can cost the association dearly if young people are not found, promoted and retained in the association in the long term.

“Yes, but...” but nothing!

Mr. Beckmann, Ms. Küsgens, Ms. Meyer, to summarise, structures must be adapted in such a way that, for example, people who care for others can also participate well in meetings. Holding board meetings digitally or in a hybrid form can help to attract young people to participate. One should be a role model oneself and band together with others. And last but not least, there is a need for opportunities that fit the target group on the one hand and optimally prepare for a career in the association on the other. Is that right?

Udo Beckmann (UB): “Yes, exactly. It sounds like a lot at first, but it can be done in small steps and little by little.”

Tanja Küsgens (TK): “That’s right. The point is to get started, and for an awareness of injustice to arise so we look at how it can be changed.”

Susann Meyer (SM): “The measures in the brochure are just the tip of the iceberg. There are of course more ideas besides these, but these are the most promising. It is very important that the mindset can be changed.

For example, we younger people are not simply obedient seekers after places on the board. No, we have competence that we would gladly bring into play.”

Yes, but... let’s be honest now. One topic was left out: the argument “women/younger people don’t want to be on the board”. Is that not true?

SM: “Of course there are people who don’t want to be actively involved in the association or even be elected to the board. I think there are enough who can imagine themselves so ...”

TK: “... if the right structures are in place.”

UB: “With this brochure we have presented good ideas for this. Now it’s up to the state associations what they do with it.”

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