

## Best Practice for 'MORE Men in ECEC Centres' – Press and public relations work as an essential element

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Since 2011, ideas and public relations measures have been developed in 16 model projects all over Germany to motivate men to choose the profession of early childhood ECEC worker. A variety of creative products, ranging from posters and brochures to websites, cinema spots, etc. were created as part of the Germany-wide 'MORE Men in ECEC' model programme. But what measures are most effective for getting through to men? And what might a successful image campaign for the profession of ECEC worker look like? In the following, we will summarise the experience gained in the model projects and provide information about effective public relations work.

A number of model projects developed concepts and coordinated activities under a central theme, such as the campaigns 'Diversity, MAN! Your talent for Hamburg's ECEC centres' from Hamburg, 'Strong guys for strong kids' from Stuttgart, 'ECEC worker, a great job' from Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, 'Live your talents – become an ECEC worker' from Wiesbaden or 'Become an ECEC worker' from Saxony, for example.

The strategy is the centrepiece of a communications concept. It describes the approach as well as which messages are to reach which target group. We also talk about a communicative lever to trigger a change of opinion and attitude among members of the target group. Strategies are developed during an analysis phase. Preparatory considerations are essential for the successful development of the campaign and the associated press and public relations work. Only then can targeted measures be implemented.

This paper describes, first of all, the common starting situation for the different campaigns that were carried out by the model project groups. The target groups were identified, as well as the obstacles and barriers which have prevented men until now from choosing to become an ECEC worker. The section on strategy provides a description of the approaches developed by the model projects on the basis of the analysis. These show what motifs, messages and slogans were used to develop measures in the subsequent phase. The measures taken range from online marketing and personal conversations to measures directed at the broader public, such as cinema spots and poster campaigns. The conclusion will draw an initial balance.

### **Starting point of every strategy - the analysis**

Every strategy begins with taking stock of the situation at hand. Spending time on this at the beginning avoids false investments and saves extra work to get back on track after a false start. The essential cornerstones of a campaign are established in the analysis phase, and they have a considerable influence on whether the goal is eventually reached. This often means asking the right questions and answering them in a sensitive way.

### **Who do we want to get through to, and why? Objectives and target groups**

'The journey is its own reward,' is an often-quoted saying, but does not apply to the planning of PR activities. This is because you can only consciously direct public relations measures, if you know your final objective.

The officially stated objective of the model programme 'MORE Men in ECEC Centres' is as follows:

*"With the launch of the ESF model programme 'MORE Men in ECEC centres', the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth strives to promote the development and implementation of strategies to increase the proportion of male ECEC workers in ECEC centres over the next three years. The aim is to make boys and men more interested in taking up the profession of ECEC worker, to support men in their decision to choose the profession of ECEC worker and to improve perspectives for men (and women) in the area of early education and child care. The programme aims to contribute towards reaching the EU goal of 20% male ECEC workers in ECEC centres in the medium and long run by testing innovative models and documenting and communicating best-practice experience resulting from those models." (Source: [www.esf-Regiestelle.eu](http://www.esf-Regiestelle.eu))*

Thus, in general, the following three issues can be formulated:

- short-term objective: to achieve a wide-spread presence of the 'MORE Men in ECEC' programme in the media.
- medium-term objective: to increase the number of male students training to become early childhood ECEC workers, and improve the public image of the profession.
- long-term objective: to steadily increase the number of male ECEC workers in ECEC centres to 20%.

A precise identification of the target group is another essential cornerstone of the public relations work as a whole. The media approach, the corresponding measures and media channels (e.g. classic advertising materials, websites, social networks, etc.) must be chosen to match the target group. The more precisely the target group is identified the more specifically it can be addressed. For this reason, it is important to investigate as many socio-demographic and psychographic features as possible, such as age, interests, media behaviour, attitudes and personal values. We distinguish between primary and secondary target groups. In the model programme, men who face career decisions or want to make a career change are the primary target group. The secondary target group includes parents, teachers, job counsellors, people guiding adolescents, etc., who exercise influence on profession choices. The media are also included, in part, in the secondary target group or qualify as so called mediators.

The importance of career changers as a target group (men who already have a profession, but want to move in a new professional direction) was completely underestimated at the beginning of the model programme. Many of these men contacted the model projects and the Coordination Centre 'Men in ECEC' following the first Germany-wide response in the media. They need a special amount of counselling, because they bring different backgrounds with them, and the existing (or not yet existing) promotion and training opportunities vary from federal state to federal state.

Most of the career changers have a busy life, have many years of practical experience in their jobs and are looking for a meaningful occupation in the area of early education and child care. Among them you may find skilled craftsmen, businessmen, lawyers or media professionals. They can be an enormous enrichment for daily life in ECEC centres with the skills they have acquired in other areas and they provide a untold potential for early childhood education and care.

**What prevents men from choosing the profession of ECEC worker?**

In order to find the right strategy for communications work, it is important to gather as much information as possible about the target group and about the image of the occupation. What makes the profession of ECEC worker attractive and interesting for men? What are the main obstacles preventing men from choosing the profession? What advantages does the profession offer compared to others?

An investigation of the relevant publications showed that young men mainly chose occupations in the commercial skilled crafts sector. Female trainees mainly chose the services sector. This is confirmed, for example, by an analysis of the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) from 2009. Among the 25 most popular training objectives among young men are 13 professions in which 90% of the employees are male. This shows that career decisions of male and female school students depend, above all, on gender (for more information see the "Motivating Boys and Men to Chose the Profession of ECEC worker" guide).

Another argument which appears time and again in the debate about the shortage of men in ECEC centres is the issue of pay. In view of the fact that the top training options for young men - auto mechatronics, trained retail salesman and industrial mechanic – are, upon entry, sometimes paid less well or only slightly better than the profession of ECEC worker, might imply that money is not the only decision criterion for the choice of a profession. Rather, it is the prejudice prevalent among the public that ECEC workers make hardly any money in comparison to other professions that becomes apparent as one of the main obstacles when recruiting young men for the job of ECEC worker.

Public perception is influenced in a similar way by the rarely challenged fact that the profession is inextricably linked to the female gender, and that it is a profession that is generally held in low esteem in comparison to other professions. The importance of early childhood education and care is only gradually making its way onto the public agenda. ECEC centres are only gradually beginning to see themselves as educational institutions, and the idea of ECEC workers being competent educational specialists and guides for children in their first years of life is only slowly gaining ground. Against this backdrop, it is easy to forget that men naturally have a role to play in educational processes and that the diversity in society should be reflected in ECEC centres.

### **Why do men decide to become an ECEC worker?**

The Hamburg model project discussed the central motivation for choosing a profession among groups of male and female school students and ECEC workers. This revealed a great lack of guidance and showed that decisions are often taken randomly and are clearly influenced by friends and acquaintances. Boys take their best friend or their father as a role model when choosing a profession. On the other hand, it was found that male ECEC workers often come to the profession as part of a second career training path. Although the profession of ECEC worker is often seen as an option at an early stage due to experience gained in internships, many young men initially decide to choose a profession with a 'male' connotation. These men do not pursue their actual career aspiration before their early to mid-twenties. This was also confirmed by a survey among male ECEC workers in Stuttgart.

Furthermore, the Hamburg project compared the aspects of their work in an ECEC centre that experienced male ECEC workers like with what young men want from their profession. What they had in common was that fun, variety, flexible working arrangements, a diverse range of skills and recognition occupied a central place, concerning both what the profession of ECEC worker requires

and the motivation for choosing it. This meant that the focus was on diversity. Many other model projects came to similar conclusions.

### **From analysis to synthesis – the strategy**

A great deal of information is usually accumulated in the course of the analysis, and it must be investigated and prioritised to be finally transformed into a strategy. This requires a high degree of sensitivity without losing sight of the target group, since it often happens that campaigns and motifs are designed in such a way that they satisfy the client, but fail to address the target group. Some female ECEC workers in the Hamburg model project questioned, for example, why only men were depicted and why only men were being addressed.

Certainly, there were sufficient grounds for concern that women already working in ECEC centres might feel 'put off' by the campaigns. A certain amount of tact was required to include these female ECEC workers in the process. Nevertheless, the model programme has a clearly defined target group - men - who must be addressed explicitly to feel addressed at all. The model projects mastered this challenge by communicating messages in their campaign which also included the women.

### **Messages used to address the public**

As part of the analysis, the model projects identified the communication challenges and developed messages directed at the public for their regional campaigns.

All campaigns in the model projects placed the communication focus especially on emphasising the advantages of the profession for men and on making clear that ECEC worker is not exclusively a female profession. The female ECEC workers already working in ECEC centres were included in the communicated messages, thus placing a further focus on improving the image of the professional field in general.

In the following we will give some examples of arguments and claims communicated to the press and in brochures:

- A diverse range of men (and women) are needed in early childhood education and care.
- There are no 'typical' men or typical women.
- Early childhood education and care is a matter for men as well as women.
- As an ECEC worker I can contribute to the education of children with my diverse talents and interests.
- ECEC workers shape the future and change society.
- ECEC worker is a challenging and responsible job.
- The work of an ECEC worker is meaningful and lively.

### **The strategic foundation – campaign directions and slogans**

Most model projects channelled their public relations measures under a central unifying theme. The so-called campaign claim, or slogan, represents the synthesis of the analysis phase and sums up the messages of the campaign, thus making communication easier. This means that the slogan should be

as promotionally effective and fresh as possible. At best it should create a better identification with the campaign's objectives by all parties involved and it should improve recognition of the different communication measures. It should act, as it were, as an 'eye-catching banner'.

The slogan 'Strong guys for strong kids' from the campaign realised by the Stuttgart model project stands for real educational personalities, for example. 'Strong' can have different meanings: authentic, reflective, brave, clear, creative – it is not meant physically. 'Strong' challenges the typical accusation that ECEC workers are 'softies', and turns it around. Strong children are an important goal in education, because strong children are independent, confident and resilient. Strong 'guys' can of course also be female. This was a background consideration, for the case that the campaign would be developed into a personnel recruitment campaign after the end of the project. There was some criticism of the slogan, since 'strong guys' was perceived as being exaggerated as 'great guys/heroes'.

The campaign umbrella 'Diversity, MAN! Your talent for Hamburg's ECEC centres' from the Hamburg model project showed, on the one hand, what the job of an ECEC worker in an ECEC centre includes: diverse skills, diverse perspectives, every day is different. On the other hand, the motto is an invitation to society, claiming that not only women, but also men are desired - and needed - with all their diversity, in early childhood education and care.

In general, the aim was to reflect the ideas connected with the slogan consistently in all communication measures as far as tone, images and strategic orientation were concerned. This was achieved with a uniform corporate design and wording with a high recognition value. This made it possible to attain a level equivalent to that of a highly recognisable brand, thus establishing very high sustainability. The effect the slogan has, demonstrates once again the importance of the analysis.

### **From messages to motifs**

The first step in implementing a campaign idea is to develop a visual world which brings the slogan or claim and the underlying ideas to life and renders them in a pictorial way. In this respect, it is not only important for the slogan and the image to fit perfectly together, but is also vital for the image to encapsulate the message emotionally. Often there are only seconds in which to grab the onlooker's attention. Therefore, these aspects must be employed with skill and, taking this into consideration, sometimes less is more.

The Wiesbaden model project decided to use provocative motifs, by initially appearing to reinforce traditional gender clichés - a man as a footballer or racing driver. Subsequent evaluation clearly showed that it was precisely these stereotypes which triggered public discussion in Wiesbaden about the project. Initial scepticism towards these clichés sparked useful conversations between members of the project team and people interested in the campaign, dealing with both the view that there are not enough men in ECEC centres and wider gender issues. The Wiesbaden transport company liked the advertising posters on buses so much that it even continued to display them after the booked advertising period had expired.

The Hamburg model project used messages on t-shirts worn by ECEC workers to communicate its slogan 'Diversity, MAN!' visually. The t-shirts showed professions that evoke certain associations, for example, cook, set designer or nutrition counsellor which call to mind certain images, specific skills and tasks which also play a role in daily ECEC life. At the same time, they bore descriptive nouns such as 'comforter' or 'conciliator' to symbolise the emotional aspects and responsibilities involved in the

work of trained ECEC workers. Hamburg promotes the better integration of men in early childhood education and care with the message: 'Be everything, become an ECEC worker!'.

The Stuttgart project decided to show three male ECEC workers advertising their profession with first-person messages. The visuals showed portraits of the young men creating a personal and engaging effect. The men make statements that sum up their motivation for choosing the profession of ECEC worker, for example: "There is a lot of space for creativity in an ECEC centre and I can contribute my very personal skills and talents." "The job is varied and I can carry out a wide range of activities with the children and we always have a lot to laugh about in the process." The three young men represent different personality traits among the core target group: The 'diversity' aspect, for example, represents the career changer, who chose the profession of ECEC worker after a varied career and practical experience. 'The non-conformist' is a youth and health ECEC worker and works in a nursery ECEC centre. 'The committed one' became involved in the profession of ECEC worker via his hobby and activities as a football trainer.

### **Strategic factors for a successful campaign**

The experience gained concerning how to motivate men to choose the profession of ECEC worker in 16 model projects made it possible to identify factors which significantly influenced the success of the campaigns. In this respect, credibility and networking played an important role.

### **Credibility pays off**

It became apparent even in the analysis phase that access to contacts and role models from the profession itself were a way to attract the interest of young men. This was the reason why many model projects chose real ECEC workers to be the faces of their campaigns. After all, no one can provide information about his profession more credibly than ECEC workers themselves. These men were introduced in a number of publicity measures, and they represented their vocational field as credible and authentic role models. This was probably the first time that so many male ECEC workers had been seen in Germany presenting their diverse interests, talents and approaches to the profession.

In addition, experience showed that authenticity pays off. In its first posters, the Wiesbaden project used models pretending to be ECEC workers. This made the images look more professional, but as it was obvious that they were not in fact 'real' ECEC workers, the power of identification lost out to notions of professionalism.

The welfare association *Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband* in Saxony took a different path in its campaign. The Association decided against using portrait photos of men doing practical ECEC work. Instead an 'empty space' was used to symbolise the lack of men in ECEC centres, i.e. the advertising material showed only the silhouette of a man. This was to avoid over-hasty and clichéd debates about appearance, such as fashion styles, tattoos, etc. The model project achieved authenticity on another level. The aim of the 'We need you!' campaign was to reach out to young men in the Erzgebirge region. The campaign deliberately used the regional dialect in its advertising. The Erzgebirge dialect appeared on large posters and in video clips. This presentation of the dialect attracted attention initially and stimulated debate during the test phase.

### **Achieving more together – networking several players**

Professional networking can make things much easier for initiatives that are as complex as this model programme that also want to make things happen. The complexity of the network depends on the local framework conditions and whether cooperation with other providers or institutions makes sense. ECEC providers often feel like rivals, since they are competing for the same professionals on the labour market. However, nowadays many cities recruit their personnel cross-organisationally. Networking in Hamburg under the coordination of the *Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband Hamburg e.V.* association is an interesting example of this.

The network includes all ECEC providers and associations in Hamburg, the relevant authorities, training and further training institutions, trade unions, selected schools, parents' bodies, voluntary service organisations, as well as initiatives and associations in Hamburg that explicitly address boys and men. Working together, the network not only achieved widespread acceptance for the 'Diversity, MEN' campaign, but was also able to make changes to regulatory aspects in ECEC worker training in cooperation with the Hamburg authorities, making a lot of things easier this way. This includes a simplified job search for people attending further training while working, for example. In addition, communication of the project's specific issues reached ECEC providers more easily. Since the campaign was seen as a joint activity, solidarity between the parties involved was strengthened and the profession of ECEC worker could be promoted uniformly by joining forces. Some ECEC providers even developed their own campaigns, taking up the main idea behind 'Diversity, MAN!' and placing more emphasis on men themselves. Networking also made publicity work easier. The Hamburg coordination centre rapidly established itself as the first point of contact for the media with respect to the issue 'Men in ECEC'. This meant that journalists no longer had to contact each individual organisation when looking for practical examples. Due to the variety of contacts, a contact partner could be provided within a very short period of time.

The Saxon model project also placed emphasis on networking, making it a cornerstone of its campaign. Local players were deliberately included during the project term. The Regional District Administration, the Youth Welfare Office, the Federal Job Agency and a number of ECEC providers in the model project region were involved, and benefited from the public dialogue surrounding 'MORE Men in ECEC'. This meant that the campaign was not only the product of a model project with a limited timeframe, but was also conceived as a sustainable support system for the existing regional structures involved.

### **Hunting for ECEC workers online**

Following an intensive process of stock-taking, the transferral of the results into packages of measures often happens 'organically'. The direction taken by the concept and communication channels should have been developed out of the analysis and, after being packaged in a creative and effective manner, be communicated to the media as coherently as possible.

Of course, budget has a great influence on the framework conditions of public relations work. Precise budgetary planning at the beginning forms the basis for all further planning steps for the measures. This must always be done under consideration of the questions: how best to reach out to a given target group; what timeframe should be applied for completion; what budget is available; what personnel and what external services are needed? When deciding these issues, the cost-benefit ratio should always be considered critically: what coverage does the measure have and what can be achieved using what type of measure and what must be invested to achieve this?

The Internet is an indispensable medium in this respect. Anyone searching for information nowadays 'goes online'. This development is gaining even more momentum through the mobile Internet, which is available almost permanently and everywhere via smartphone. The younger the target group, the more important a targeted approach to online communications becomes. Thus, the question is not whether we want a website or not. This is a minimum requirement. The question is rather, what channels and strategies should we use online?

### **Website**

All model projects set up websites informing the public about 'MORE Men in ECEC' and the profession of ECEC worker. Often there was no coherent information about different approaches in the individual Federal States, meaning that interested parties were quickly discouraged when searching for information.

The Stuttgart model project used its website *www.erzieher-werden.de* as the campaign's central information platform. Interested adolescents and career changers, as well as parents, could find all the important information and contacts concerning the profession and could watch the campaign video. The website was advertised in all important information media and on all give-away articles. In addition, a central contact person was indicated, who was able to answer all questions about internships, training and career prospects for anyone interested. This job was carried out by an educational specialist who was employed on a temporary basis.

The website *www.vielfalt-mann.de* is the networking communications tool of the Hamburg project. The multi-media website maintains an affinity with the target group and addresses both school students and people who already have work experience. This online presentation is the first to provide a central summary of all information for Hamburg concerning the profession of ECEC worker. It provides detailed information about training and funding opportunities, precise contact persons as well as videos showing male and female ECEC workers giving an insight into their daily work. The overall goal was to shorten communication channels and to network activities, because training to become an ECEC worker is also a very complex procedure in Hamburg. The website helps men to reach their objectives quickly during the vocational orientation phase and when searching for information, and it indicates who to ask when necessary. The website offers a contact form which has been used a great many times. Within just two years, the model project received more than 500 enquiries asking for advice. Through public advertising and press work, the website, which was promoted prominently on the posters, rapidly achieved high coverage.

Furthermore, the domain name 'Diversity, MEN!' had not been assigned on the Internet in this combination prior to the campaign's start, and it is easy to remember. As a result the website rapidly reached an impressive Google ranking. When searching for 'ECEC centre' and 'ECEC worker', *www.vielfalt-mann.de* occupies one of the first ranks out of 1.34 million results – even without the help of an external agency.

### **Social Media**

Life today is unimaginable without social media such as YouTube or Facebook. Young people in particular use these channels to network with one another and to obtain information. And they are also becoming increasingly popular among other groups in society. In Germany alone, 26 million people are said to make use of Mark Zuckerberg's bright idea.



What makes social media so attractive for organisations is the ability to contact to the target group directly. Organisations no longer have to use editorial staff to make their issues more visible. They determine themselves how their issues are communicated and receive direct feedback. At the same time, this is where one of the main risks can be found - and is probably the reason why many people recoil from using social media. With respect to the issue of 'Men in ECEC', in particular, there were considerable concerns about eliciting inappropriate responses. Fortunately, these fears were not substantiated.

Nevertheless, a project must consider whether it wants to make use of the social media or not. Using social media involves developing an appropriate strategy for the target group and pages must be kept 'alive' with regular updates. This refers both to contents and to the people communicating via these channels. Therefore, it is recommendable to take this step only if the people involved like the platform, use it actively and there is sufficient time available to maintain its pages. If a page is created only to be fashionable, it will quickly be rejected by users.

Despite the variety of social media available, many model projects concentrate on Facebook and YouTube. YouTube has been and still is used mainly as a distribution medium. During the project term, a number of short reports, image films and cinema spots were created, made available on YouTube and embedded in the respective website from there. The Stuttgart campaign video and the slightly shorter cinema spot on 'Strong guys for strong kids' received more than 7,000 clicks on YouTube in one year, for example.

As part of the Saxon campaign, entertaining and thought-provoking video clips were created and used as the central means for addressing young men. They were also distributed via YouTube, using Facebook, and on the website [www.werde-erzieher.de](http://www.werde-erzieher.de), achieving high coverage in the region.

Hamburg also used YouTube for broader distribution. The number of YouTube films created by the network contributed to the great success of the [www.vielfalt-mann.de](http://www.vielfalt-mann.de) website. Using YouTube, the films can easily be embedded on the website and they emphasise the authentic character of the poster motifs. ECEC workers speak personally in them, and are shown in their daily work as part of the campaign. In addition, they also helped to gain journalists' interest in the Hamburg model project who wanted to contact the films' protagonists.

### **Activities on Facebook as an example**

As one of the most popular networking platforms, Facebook, currently offers a number of opportunities to 'continue' events online. The model projects had a number of factors allowing the creative use of Facebook. Creativity is an essential aspect in combining 'career orientation and social media'. What young adults think about their vocational future voluntarily *and* intensely? - This means there is a constant quest for new ideas to make the issues attractive and keep interest in them alive. In the following we will give two examples of how Facebook was integrated into the campaign.

### **The Nuremberg ECEC worker casting event**

The Nuremberg model project used Facebook as a multiplier medium which, together with several other elements, formed part of the advertising measures for the 'ErziehYEAH' campaign. The Nuremberg project wanted to find the campaign's faces using open castings. The initial idea was to search for likeable and dynamic young men as visual protagonists. The campaign's faces had to be authentic, local and have a direct relationship with the profession of ECEC worker. The concept for

the campaign included both the use of classic media campaign materials - such as flyers, posters and a website ([www.erzieher-dein-beruf.de](http://www.erzieher-dein-beruf.de)) - and access via Facebook.

The model project organised the casting event in cooperation with Nuremberg vocational training schools. On the day of the casting, students were motivated to take part in the activity through loud speaker announcements. The ensuing photo shooting developed into a popular event at the colleges, and 34 candidates entered.

The resulting photos were published online for voting. The ballot was advertised using flyers, posters, the website and Facebook ([www.facebook.com/erzieYEAH](http://www.facebook.com/erzieYEAH)). Shortly after it was launched, i.e. on the first day, the tool was used 1,500 times. The increasing number of votes was accompanied by lively discussions about the candidates and whether such a voting process made sense. The voting procedure was an experiment and its result was neither foreseeable, nor controllable. The basic rule was, however, that respect must be shown for all candidates. All candidates had an equal chance of winning and each person was entitled to one vote only.

Finally, three very different 'faces' were chosen: Denis, an ECEC worker with a great deal of practical experience from a Nuremberg ECEC centre; Uwe, who was pleasant and friendly and still in training; and Julian, who was media-experienced, young and fresh - with his own fan club.

All three of them are still active in the project as multipliers at vocational training fairs, for example. They are released from work by their employers and/or from vocational training school, which was agreed upon prior to their commitment. They explain to young men at recruitment fairs what the profession of ECEC worker has to offer. They also appear on posters and advertising postcards for the 'ErzieYEAH' campaign and on the Internet forum 'ECEC men' ([www.kitamaenner.org](http://www.kitamaenner.org)).

### **'Puppet up!' – Hamburg is searching for a male model for a puppet**

With its presence on Facebook, Hamburg pursues the strategy of integrating real contacts established at events into the 'Diversity, MAN' campaign via its fan page. This means that a link to Facebook is considered for almost all events. One example is the 'Puppet up! Be a big kid!' project. A photo competition was held at a career orientation fair, a real-life model for a 'Diversity, Man!' puppet. Since only a few male puppets exist, young men were asked to lend their faces to the project - providing more male power in the ECEC centres involved in the form of a mini-man.

Contestants won a t-shirt, and a photo was taken of them in front of a funny display. The photos were uploaded onto Facebook and released for voting, a process that was open only to fans. Within a few days, the number of fans on the page had multiplied, reaching more than 800 people by the beginning of March. The young men photographed had rallied support from within their respective circles of friends. This was the reason why the photo competition gained so much attention beyond regional borders. In the end, two winners were chosen and they came especially to attend the presentation of the puppets. This developed into another event which was communicated to the press parallel to the original event. Hundreds of fans and non-fans liked and commented on the photo album on the puppet presentation.

### **Hunting for ECEC workers on a personal level**

No matter how creative a campaign might be, it is no substitute for personal contact. In the career orientation phase it is especially important for young men to come into contact with men who have

experience with working in ECEC centres and are familiar with the daily routines there, and who can provide them with competent guidance on their way into early childhood education and care. In the following, we will look at advice available to men, as well as career orientation fairs as an integral part of public relations work.

### **The lifeblood of a campaign: integrated advice**

Campaigns that do not also offer advice and personal contact are doomed to fail. If options are communicated to the public, these must go hand in hand with real answers and solutions to deal with any concrete interest that results. In other words: if you want to motivate men to work in ECEC centres and advertise this in public, there has to be someone answering the telephone and informing interested men about realistic opportunities for entering the profession. This aspect was underestimated when developing the concept for the model programme, which meant that many model projects had to spontaneously resolve the issue of providing the necessary resources during the project term.

The Hamburg model project received a few individual enquires from men who wanted to become ECEC workers at the beginning of the project in early 2011. However, when the 'Diversity, MAN!' campaign began in November of the same year, there was a veritable onslaught of enquiries. Within two years, the number of enquiries for advice rose to more than 550, and among these were many queries from men who had already completed training in another profession and had decided to change their career. Their background ranged from bank clerks and retail salesmen to electricians and plumbers to surveying technicians and chefs. Men with an academic background also asked for advice.

The main issues enquired about were the various training opportunities in Hamburg and what requirements had to be fulfilled to be admitted to ECEC worker training. Everyone asking for advice also wanted to know about the financial aspects. Since Hamburg offers extra-occupational further training for becoming a state-recognised ECEC worker, the individual advice sessions mainly focussed on where to find ECEC centres that offered part-time employment during training.

Before the model programme started, many of the men who wanted to start training were left alone with their questions and had to find out the necessary information in a roundabout way. Against this backdrop, it is not very surprising that many of them got fed up and lost interest. In addition, it has to be considered that, besides all the technical questions, men in particular need extra motivation and strong encouragement. This was an additional task for those providing the advice services.

However, the efforts to provide personal consultancy services as part of the overall public relations concept aimed at attracting more male ECEC workers in ECEC centres were worth it. A considerable number of men who sought advice in Hamburg actually started training. Since then, extra-occupational training, which had been rather neglected standard training programmes before that, is now in more demand than ever before. All in all, vocational training schools are now registering 40 percent more career starters - both men and women. New classes have been set up and a further college is planned to cover the demand.

### **Presentations at fairs: presence in career orientation**

There are a number of players in the area of career orientation, many of whom have been active for years. Vocational training fairs form an integral part of the repertoire of measures taken by

companies. ECEC centres currently take a tentative approach towards the recruitment of new talent, and now present themselves occasionally at such fairs with their own booths. The large-scale career orientation events in the regions however show this it is not only that ECEC centres which are clearly underrepresented, but also the entire social and educational field. Nevertheless, those fairs in particular are formats that provide good opportunities to show presence at the right moment - i.e. in a setting where young people are open to the difficult issue of 'career orientation'. Furthermore, the target group is much better represented at these events than is usually the case. Over two days, the Hamburg model project provided advice for more than 800 people at the 'EINSTIEG2011' fair, among them 520 young men.

Personal contact with members of the target group makes it easier to address them more easily on an emotional level. This is reflected by the positive experience gained in many model projects. The presence of male ECEC workers, in particular, turned out to be a guarantee of success. They were able to make contact with the young people at the booth in an easygoing manner and describe the job based from the point of view of their own first-hand experience in an authentic and convincing manner.

At the same time, this is one of the few possibilities for young people to experience a male ECEC worker 'live' at all, meaning that they can break down clichés or prejudices. Since men are not so well represented in early childhood education and care, they can be found even less in the respective career guidance. This scarcity value gives them a certain 'exotic status' and generates attention - which is a no easy thing when dealing with young people.

The other side of the coin is the amount of effort involved in career orientation events. Depending on size, a presentation at a fair costs between 3,000 and 6,000 euros and also requires personnel. This might be too much for a individual ECEC providers. Networking can clearly reduce efforts in this respect. On the one hand, a joint presentation by several providers might carry a certain risk due to the competition situation, but, on the other hand, it provides more power to reach the common goal - more men in ECEC centres, and nevertheless each provider can benefit individually. Furthermore, a number of schools, colleges and authorities offer career orientation events which usually cost little or nothing. Here, individual ECEC centres can use the opportunity and recruit new talent.

### **Advertising - mostly cost intensive, but widely effective**

Placing adverts to spread messages and campaign motifs is generally expensive. In addition, there is an apparently endless range of advertising forms and channels. The great advantage is, however, the broad effect of advertising. In the following, as an example, we will show when and why radio, outdoor and cinema advertising are effective.

### **Radio advertising**

Cooperation with a radio broadcaster is usually very cost-intensive. However, it provides considerable and widespread coverage. This was shown by the cooperation between the 'MORE Men in ECEC - Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania' model project and a private radio broadcaster. The project struck a media partnership with one of the two large private radio broadcasters in this Federal State. This partnership formed the centrepiece of the project's public relations campaign and has proved its worth in all aspects.

For more than two and a half years the profession of ECEC worker was promoted by broadcasting a pithy spot twice a day, and a short spot on 'MORE Men in ECEC' was presented at the radio's job fair regularly. About three quarters of the approx. 250 males from Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania interested in changing their career to become an ECEC worker contacted the project's offices due to the radio advertising.

More important than listening figures, however, is the fact that the advertising is repeated regularly, reiterating the message which addresses different target groups and summarising the salient points of the profession of ECEC worker. Finally, many interested men did not find out about the project themselves but were informed by relatives or friends. In addition, many partner projects reported that the people in other federal states also heard about the local radio advertising. Finally, ministries of two federal states enquired about adopting the campaign. With the help of this media partnership it was possible to draw public attention to both 'MORE Men in ECEC' and the profession itself, including its attractive, modern aspects. This sustainably improved appreciation of the profession in society.

### **Outdoor advertising**

Outdoor advertising measures also have a broad effect and make a great impression - especially with large posters - due to their imposing format. The Hamburg network took this opportunity to be very present in the city as one of the main factors for the successful launch of 'Diversity, Man!'. It turned out that it was the right decision to initially limit the advertising campaign to a short period, but to comprehensively address as many different media channels as possible during that time. This meant that the project was initially so present in Hamburg that it was difficult to overlook the campaign, and much attention was drawn to an issue which had been completely underrepresented until then. The accompanying press work also did its job.

The Stuttgart project also made use of different media channels. The advertising on buses and trains especially gained a great deal of positive attention. During the weeks after the start of the media campaign, around 250 men called or sent emails expressing interest. When asked, more than half of them said that the posters in the public arena had caught their attention.

In general, we can say that outdoor advertising relating to an issue which is generally new for the public should only be used if sufficient means are available to achieve a real presence. In addition, the message transported by the campaign should motivate or request a certain activity and have an 'Aha!' effect. Furthermore, contact details should be given (in Hamburg: motifs of 'real' ECEC workers who work in ECEC centres; the request 'Be everything, become an ECEC worker' together with contact information). Otherwise the budget invested will not yield the desired results.

### **Cinema advertising**

The great advantage of cinema advertising is certainly that it cannot be switched off. The viewers are unable to avoid watching a spot, which means that advertising is generally perceived with more attention than on TV, for example. However, the production of a cinema spot involves considerably more effort and cost than the production of a radio ad or poster. The costs for placing the spot must also be factored in.

The Bremerhaven model project produced four cinema spots which intended to draw attention to early childhood education and care and to raise interest. The film concept focused on the contrast

between the working environment in ECEC centres and recreation activities. The protagonists in the spot were real ECEC workers, which had a positive effect on the feedback. Through the advertising clip a number of men from Bremerhaven and surroundings became aware of the project and afterwards asked for information by telephone or email. A total of approx. 81,000 cinema visitors saw the spot.

The Hamburg model project began to advertise in the cinema in 2012. They commissioned an external production company to draw up the concept and to produce the spot. The protagonists in the film are 'real' ECEC workers like those on the posters. The spot concept was tailored to the strategic approach of 'Diversity, MAN!' and also worked with the professions shown on the campaign t-shirts. The spot was presented in two sessions and emphasis was placed on showing it prior to films which attract a high percentage of men. It was shown in the pre-programme to the James Bond film 'Skyfall' and 'The Hobbit', for example. The spot was presented for four weeks and more than 330,000 male and female cinema visitors saw it.

The cinema advertising for the Hamburg project was accompanied by outdoor advertising. For this campaign, new advertising formats were used, such as an illuminated *Litfaßsäule* (street advertising pillar), while other formats, however, were rejected. Due to the number of male and female users on the websites and the resulting contact enquiries, it can be concluded that the response to this advertising phase was as high as in the previous year. This is amazing, insofar as the innovative effect of 'Men in ECEC' had already been exhausted for one year and that no comparable press attention could be gained at the second launch of the campaign. Cinema advertising in particular provides the opportunity to address target groups that cannot be reached by other means, for example, with outdoor advertising.

## **Conclusion**

Regional public relations work spread over the whole of Germany has helped men in ECEC centres tangibly to gain more visibility and acceptance over the past two years.

We can observe that the press is dealing with the issue of male ECEC workers in an increasingly natural manner. The word 'exotic' is still used in this connection, but men are much more present in images dealing with the issue than in the past - even if texts do not always explicitly refer to them. At the beginning of 2011, there were hardly any images regarding the issue.

Furthermore, vocational training schools for the profession of ECEC worker are seeing a clear trend towards increased demand from male and female applicants all over Germany. At some places, the proportion of men among those beginning the training has risen more than ever before. In their forecasts, Hamburg authorities expect that the shortage of trained ECEC workers will be relieved in future due to the model project's efforts, for example.

Feedback from the model projects also showed that both have changed the image of male ECEC workers and the image of men in society in general. Nevertheless, it was also possible to successfully integrate women in the field of ECEC. This can be seen from the increasingly positive feedback and the rising number of enquiries from women who themselves want to promote the issue of 'Men in ECEC' asking for advice or information material.

All this shows very well that projects that aim to bring about a change in society require professional communication structures and measures. Here, the combination of publicity work and marketing

with the provision of competent consultancy is a good prerequisite - both for matters large and small.

ECEC centres can make good use of the work of the model projects. Institutions now have the opportunity to attract increasing demand - i.e. from men motivated to take up the profession of ECEC worker - to their centres, showing interested people publicly that they are welcome. However, this can succeed only if career orientation for ECEC workers is given the priority it deserves, and administrators and ECEC providers develop a new understanding of their functions as employers and training institutions.

This means a decision has to be made: Do we see the search for (male) ECEC workers mainly as a burden, and are measures leading towards this goal taken reluctantly or not at all? Or should long-term gains have priority and will administrators develop a better understanding of their role on a labour market that is providing ever fewer human resources? After all, a lack of skilled personnel is evident in all sectors. Finally, the profession of ECEC worker with a focus on ECEC centres is only one of the many options jobseekers may choose. In view of this situation, no institution and no ECEC provider can close their eyes to the issue of public relations work and career orientation.

#### **References:**

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