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WSI Project Lohnspiegel:

## Even at the start of their career women earn less than men

There is a clear gap between the earnings of women and men in Germany even when both are just starting work. A study for the German government by the WSI research institute (Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut, part of the Hans-Böckler-Foundation) has found that, in their first three years of work, women earn on average 18.7% less than their male counterparts.\*

Dr. Reinhard Bispinck, who led the project, said, "The gender pay gap cannot be fully explained by either differing educational qualifications or the specific choice of jobs." He told an expert seminar earlier this month that "the results point much more to the continuation of gender-specific pay discrimination."

The study, carried out for German Federal Ministry for Women, is based on the Lohnspiegel database which contains the records of 106,000 individuals in Germany. Lohnspiegel is the German member of the international wage indicator network.

### Results:

- The gender pay gap widens *the longer people have been in work*: while women with up to three years' work experience earn 18.7% less than their male colleagues, the gap increases to 21.8% in the group with between four and 10 years' experience.
- The gender pay gap is greater in the former *West Germany* than in the former *East Germany*, where, in contrast to the West, the gap decreases with longer work experience.
- The gender pay gap for those just starting work varies between *different industries*, ranging from 4.6% in the energy and water industries to 21.2% in credit and insurance.
- In *larger workplaces* there is a bigger gap in money terms between the earnings of men and women starting work than in smaller workplaces; the percentage gender pay gap, however, remains largely unaffected.
- The gender pay gap varies widely between different *occupations*, ranging from under 10% for computer and IT jobs to more than 20% in food processing occupations.
- Compared with other *European* countries Germany's gender pay gap is the third widest among the eight countries examined. Of the other seven, Spain is at the top of the list with a gender pay gap of 30.4%, followed by Poland with 26.0%, the UK with 17.0%, Finland with 11.7%, the Netherlands with 11.5%, Denmark with 9.8% and Belgium with 9.4%.

### Causes:

Analysis of the data shows that women's lower earnings can only be partially explained by differing occupational choices, educational differences or careers being interrupted to bring up children. The lack of opportunities for promotion also plays a role. However, all of these are no more than partial explanations. The WSI analysis confirms what has been found in other studies, that an important part on the gender specific pay gap cannot be explained by personal attrib-

utes or structural factors, but rather is the result of the discriminatory treatment of women at work.

## Monthly earnings of men and women by length of employment



Quelle: WSI-Lohnspiegel-Datenbank – [www.lohnspiegel.de](http://www.lohnspiegel.de)

Source: WSI Lohnspiegel database [www.lohnspiegel.de](http://www.lohnspiegel.de)

### Notes to editors

The basis for the study\* is the dataset of the Lohnspiegel database which is drawn from an online survey which has been running since 2004. The analysis covers 106,000 records for German employees, of which 16,000 are for those in the first three years of their working lives. The European comparison draws on 75,000 records of those just starting work in eight countries.

Lohnspiegel is a project of the WSI (Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut – Institute of Social and Economic Research) in the Hans Böckler Foundation.

The full study is available in German at:

[http://www.boeckler.de/pdf/p\\_ta\\_lohnspiegel\\_berufsanfaengerinnen.pdf](http://www.boeckler.de/pdf/p_ta_lohnspiegel_berufsanfaengerinnen.pdf)

\*R. Bispinck/H. Dribbusch/F. Öz, Geschlechtsspezifische Lohndifferenzen nach dem Berufsstart und in der ersten Berufsphase. Eine Analyse von Einkommensdaten auf Basis der WSI-Lohnspiegel-Datenbank in Deutschland und im europäischen Vergleich, (Gender-specific pay differences after starting work and in the first phase of employment. An analysis of earnings data on the basis of the Lohnspiegel database in Germany and including a European comparison) BMFSFJ-Publikationen 2009.

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