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WOMEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

COUNTRY REPORT

GERMANY





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83.31 mil

Population

28.20%

Females' with tertiary education level

48.40%

Share of females

2.90%

Females' unemployment rate

30.70%

Females' with low education level

30.0%

Females' long-term unemployment rate

Development of social enterprises

There is no state adapted concept of social enterprises or specific legal regulations in Germany. Many organisations that could be considered as social enterprises strive to obtain the "public benefit status," which is applicable to a diverse range of legal forms. The association remains the most common form.

In 2019, the Social Entrepreneurship Network Germany took the initiative to address the issue and developed its own definition. It is based on specific criteria derived from the network and its members. Although social enterprise activities represent only 12% of all entrepreneurial activities in Germany, the concept of social entrepreneurship is gaining popularity. The percentage of early-stage (or start-ups) social enterprise activities among the adult population is almost as high as the percentage of established social enterprises, which represent 43% and 57% respectively. This indicates that there is a growing interest and inclination towards social entrepreneurship among individuals in Germany.

The main social impact areas

Environmental issues, education, female empowerment, women's business support and development.

The main economic sectors for social enterprises

Education, and childcare, healthcare and social services, catering, information and communication, etc.

Ecosystem – women in social entrepreneurship

As there is no commonly agreed definition of social enterprise in the country, the estimates vary depending on the calculated legal forms that could be considered as social entrepreneurship – e.g., the SEND estimated that Germany is home to up to 500,000 social enterprises. Other estimates, within the KfW Research study, suggest that in 2017 alone there were over 108,000 social enterprises that were less than 5 years old.

The latest German Social Entrepreneurship Monitor 2021/22 (DSEM) shows that more than half of surveyed social enterprises have women on the management boards (52.70%), and there has been a slight increase since the DSEM 2019. The overall workforce has an even higher representation of women at 60.30%.

In comparison with the management positions of other forms of organisation, a clear difference emerges. For example, the share of female founders in the German start-up environment is 15.9% and general business is 36%. Thus, Germany's social enterprises are bucking the national trend when it comes to gender balance among business leaders.

Key findings on women social entrepreneurship

Looking at the start-up sector in Germany, the Female Founders Monitor (FFM) of 2022 reveals a positive trend.

GERMANY

The share of female founders in Germany has increased to 20%, and 37% of founding teams currently include at least one woman. However, women remain significantly underrepresented in entrepreneurship. The FFM also suggests that start-ups founded by female teams tend to have fewer employees and are generally smaller in size on average, indicating challenges in terms of growth. Additionally, there is a clear imbalance in funding with female teams being almost equally likely to receive funding, but the amounts received differ significantly.

As a result, social entrepreneurship can play a crucial role in unlocking the potential of women in Germany. Through their social and entrepreneurial activities, most women see themselves as contributing to other women's empowerment.

“
**WOMEN'S SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IMPACTS ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES,
EDUCATION, FEMALE EMPOWERMENT
AND WOMEN'S BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT IN GERMANY.**
”

Key obstacles

Interviewed experts stressed that some of the problems faced by women entrepreneurs are primarily not gender specific. At the same time, the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities emerged as the greatest challenge for women. Other obstacles that need to be addressed are disadvantages in the area of financing and a clear imbalance in business-relevant networks.

Also, there is an excessive amount of bureaucracy. In more details, there is too little targeted follow-up financing and there are hardly any financially supportive framework conditions.

In general, Germany lacks a start-up culture and tradition, which translates to insufficient encouragement and support for the decision to become a social entrepreneur.

Key knowledge and skills need

Basic knowledge and training are needed in terms of:

- basic understanding of economics
- bureaucracy
- business administration (especially taxes)
- legal form, non-profit status and profitability
- ICT and necessary infrastructure
- company matrix, business plan
- marketing
- Soft skills: empathy, sensitivity and ability to delegate.

Drivers and opportunities

The self-employment was highlighted as an advantage for women in balancing their professional and private lives – self-determined women with children can better manage their time. Self-employment offers the freedom to shape the work according to their own preferences (implementing their own ideas, shaping work processes, leading a team).

As a gender-specific advantage, the unique strengths associated with women, which have a growing impact in the field of social entrepreneurship were identified. Key competencies include empathy, the ability to empower others, and promotion of personal growth. Furthermore, the opportunity to engage with other women serves as a motivating factor and the focus on social aspects outweighs their individual preferences.

In terms of support, Germany has widely established programs to support general entrepreneurship and women in entrepreneur activities, especially during the start-up phase.



However, these initiatives do not specifically target social entrepreneurship. As a result of the lack of systematic governmental support for social entrepreneurship, various private initiatives have emerged. Besides, the regions of Berlin and Hessen offer social entrepreneurs their own support programs specially tailored to the needs of social start-ups (see below Key support programmes and initiatives).

Policy recommendation to empower women

In order to make Germany a more attractive location for social enterprises, some basic conditions still need to be improved, including development of a national strategy, containing clear responsibilities and overall coordination between different entities.

Moreover, there is a need to expand support of social innovation centres and implement more targeted financing instruments, specifically suitable for the social entrepreneurship development stage and women entering self-employment. Staggered funding over longer periods might be more effective.

Given that women often face challenges in balancing family and career responsibilities, it is essential for the state, politics, and society to drive significant improvements in this area. Resolving this issue goes beyond providing financial assistance; it requires social recognition and political will. For instance, offering dedicated office spaces specifically for women or providing sponsored public transport tickets would significantly contribute to supporting them.

POLICY MAKERS AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

- [German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action](#)
- [Berlin Senate Department for Economic Affairs, Energy and Enterprises](#)

ORGANISATIONS AND NETWORKS REPRESENTING SE SECTOR

- [Social Entrepreneurship Netzwerk Germany \(SEND\)](#)
- [Technology Network Berlin e.V. \(TechNet\)](#)
- [Bundesverband Deutsche Startups e.V.](#)
- [FASE – The Financing Agency for Social Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Competence Center for Social Innovation Germany](#)
- [Berliner Social Impact gGmbH](#)
- [Yunus Social Business](#)

KEY FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

- [FASE – The Financing Agency for Social Entrepreneurship](#)
- [KfW Bank funding](#)
- [Investitionsbank Berlin \(IBB\) Ventures](#)
- [Investitionsbank Berlin \(IBB\) Coaching BONUS](#) – subsidies to Berlin companies for business coaching
- The Berlin-based GLS Bank – social loans, supporting social and environmental projects

DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS, PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE AND MENTORING

- [Impact Hub Berlin](#) (skill-building workshops, co-working, global community)
- [Social Business Women e.V.](#)
- [Gründerinnenzentrale](#) – support for starting business

MENTORING, incl. LEGAL ADVICE/CONSULTATIONS

- [Social Entrepreneurship Akademie](#) – consulting services
- [Ashoka Germany](#) – mentorship program
- [Gründerinnenzentrale](#) – support for starting business
- [Social Business Women e.V.](#)

OTHER

- [CoCo – Frauen gründen](#)
- [Impact Factory Berlin](#)
- [National Agency for Women Start-ups Activities and Services](#)
- [Social Economy Berlin](#)
- [Social Entrepreneurship Network Deutschland](#)
- [Social Impact Lab Berlin](#)
- Recognition of the non-profit status of an enterprise

Used sources:

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- European Women's Lobby (2015), [Women's Social Entrepreneurship in Germany](#).
- GINSEP (2022), [The German Startup Monitor 2022](#)
- Patton, A. (2020), [Frauen power: Are Germany's social enterprises bucking a trend of male-dominated business?](#), Pioneers Post
- SEND, Euclid (2021), [Deutscher Social Entrepreneurship Monitor 2020/21](#)
- SEND, [Social entrepreneurship](#)
- The [Euclid Network](#) Knowledge Centre, [Ecosystem mapping: Country factsheet, Germany](#).
- U.POWER Country Report of Germany (analysis of data and expert interviews) by NGO NEST
- Eurostat, Population of Germany (2023, 2022)
- Eurostat, Unemployment rates (2022)



SUCCESS STORIES





GERMANY

Grow Together Germany & Family Playdates Success Story



**AGNESA KOLICA
(CEO)**

Sector: Inclusion

www.family-playdates.org
facebook.com/familyplaydatesffm

LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS

N/A

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)

More than 1500 people engaged in activities.



INTRODUCTION TO THE CEO

Agnesa Kolica is an award-winning social innovator for connecting people across cultures with the aim of building peaceful societies. She came herself as a refugee to Germany from Kosovo at the age of five. Lots of the ambition and purpose that is driving Family Playdates is linked to her personal experiences. Therefore, she strongly supports an intergenerational approach.

THE MAIN AIM

Family Playdates connects people across cultures with the aim of building peaceful societies, by creating opportunities for encounters and networking - for example when visiting museums together, on the playground, in nature, in the theatre, at home with the families or online.

QUOTATION FROM THE CEO

“... IN THIS WAY, PARENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ARRIVE IN SOCIETY AT THE SAME TIME AS THEIR CHILDREN ...”



GERMANY

Manomama Success Story



MANOMAMA

AGNESA KOLICA (CEO)

Sector: Fair Fashion

www.manomama.de

facebook.com/manomama

LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS

Standing up for something good goes hand in hand with setbacks, only then it is a case of: keep your head up and carry on!

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)

Today manomama produces ecological clothing & bags with over 120 people in their manufactory in Augsburg within a unique, regional value chain.



INTRODUCTION TO THE CEO

With the birth of her son, Sina felt the desire to pursue a socially relevant responsibility with her work. Sina founded manomama in 2010 with the aim of giving people who cannot find a place in the job market a chance to earn their own living. Sina stands up for the people she calls "family" and shows that her principle of regional value creation works as an alternative path.

THE MAIN AIM

Started in 2010 as the first social business in the regional textile industry, manomama manufactures ecological clothing in a unique regional value chain. What many thought was an impossible story is still making history today: together with over 120 people, manomama have created a medium-sized specialised company with 4000 years of expertise from a hall full of a previously considered 'unqualified' workforce.

QUOTATION FROM THE CEO

"I PUSH FORWARD SO MUCH. I'M A QUICK-THINKING PERSON BECAUSE I HAVE A SEWING BUSINESS, NOT A WASHCLOTH TESTING LAB."



GERMANY

KOPF, HAND + FUSS gGmbH Success Story



**STEFANIE TRZECINSKI
(CEO)**

Sector: Inclusion and diversity

kopfhandundfuss.de/ueber-uns/die-gruenderin/

LESSONS LEARNED AND TIPS

Talk about your ideas beforehand with the right people in the right places so they cannot be stolen from you.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS (RESULTS ACHIEVED)

Successful Projects include SOUL MATE. Mental care at work for people with disabilities, SPEED (Schools Programme for Ethical Enterprise Development), SCHIFF AHOI, and LAYA - Learn as you are.



INTRODUCTION TO THE CEO

KOPF, HAND + FUSS gGmbH was founded in 2010 by Berlin entrepreneur Stefanie Trzecinski, a former Microsoft manager, and was developed for several years in parallel to her professional work. In September 2013 Stefanie Trzecinski took the important step to decide to work full-time for KOPF, HAND + FUSS.

THE MAIN AIM

KOPF, HAND + FUSS develop digital solutions for deaf children, for example, with the knowledge platform Gebärdengrips. The app IRMGARD helps low-literate adults learn to read and write. In addition, the inclusive eLearning platform LAYA enables lifelong learning for people of all backgrounds. Besides, KOPF, HAND + FUSS GmbH is running a coworking space, Tuechtig, and an academy, with inclusive and free educational offers for awareness courses.

QUOTATION FROM THE CEO

"...I CAN DESIGN EVERYTHING ACCORDING TO MY OWN IDEAS, AND THAT IS THE BIGGEST ADVANTAGE ..."

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