Education Activities at the German Aerospace Center: Aligning Strategies and Capabilities for Equal Opportunities

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The DLR
German Aerospace Research Center
Space Agency of the Federal Republic of Germany
Project Management Agency
Sites and employees

5,700 employees working in 29 research institutes and facilities

- at 13 sites.

Mission

To open up new dimensions for exploring the earth and the universe, for protecting the environment and for promoting mobility, communication and security:

- Research portfolio ranging from basic research to innovative applications and the products of tomorrow
- Operating large-scale research facilities for DLR’s own projects and as a service provider for its clients and partners
- Advisory services to government
- Promoting the next generation of scientists
Strategic approach

- Strengthening a top position among world leaders in the areas and tasks handled by DLR
- Cooperating with industry and science as partners and clients
- Programmatic focus on multi-disciplinary activities and national and international networks for sharing work in the areas of aeronautics, space, space management, transport and energy
- Operating institutes dedicated to individual disciplines with the highest standard of scientific and technological excellence
- Gaining strength from highly-qualified, dedicated, motivated employees
- Using modern instruments for focused personnel development, equal opportunities and family friendliness
Societal Challenges in Germany

- Education system
  - Decreasing interest in sciences during the last decades
  - Fewer young graduates choose scientific careers

- Demographic development
  - Difficulties to meet the future needs of a “Innovation and Knowledge Society”

- Growing challenges of globalisation
DLR Objectives

- Promote young researchers
- Ensure sufficient and skilful workforce for tomorrow
- Enhance awareness of DLR’s contribution to face global challenges
- Promote greater understanding of the significance of science
The Way Forward

- Improved education and outreach strategies at DLR
  - Translate and transfer knowledge gained by engineers and research teams at DLR
  - Create and disseminate effective and engaging education activities and materials
  - Communicate the excitement of space and science
  - Develop graduate and postdoctoral programmes to prepare the next generation
  - Reach new generations of learners
    - Children, students, teachers, parents
  - Reach stakeholders in politics and industry
  - Reach the general public
Equal Opportunities Program at DLR

- Anchoring equal opportunities as one of the guiding principles within the corporate culture

- Realising equal opportunities on all levels in research and administration

- Facilitating Work-Life-Balance and developing family friendliness
  - Promote Dual Career Couples
  - Expand service for families, day care
Equal Opportunities Program at DLR

- Addressing specifically girls and young women
  - Develop or modify education activities with regard to gender aspects
  - Targeted communication towards the different groups (girls, female students and scientists)
  - Establish a periodic interdisciplinary symposium for female students and researchers from inside and outside DLR

- Strengthening internal and external communication of the Equal Opportunities
  - Increase visibility of female researchers inside and outside DLR
  - Building a network of stakeholders
DLR_School_Labs

**Objectives**
- Promote interest in engineering and natural sciences and in aerospace research
- Encourage young people to study sciences
- Inform about DLR

**Target Groups**
- Grammar and middle school students
- Teachers
- Interested public, politicians, media
DLR_School_Labs offer

- Experiments close to current research in an authentic environment
- Support for evaluation, discussion of results
- Lectures, supporting materials for lessons at school
- Multimedia presentations
- Exhibits
- Transfer of knowledge from science to school
- A network of scientists and teachers
The DLR_School_Labs are located at DLR research institutes.
Experimental topics DLR_School_Lab in the Institute of Aerospace Medicine, Cologne

- Weightlessness
- Artificial comets
- Gravitational Biology
- Material science
- Cardiovascular Physiology
- Photochemistry
- Vacuum
- Active noise reduction
- Fuel Cells
- Air traffic control
Variable complexity
Does our concept work?

**Number of visitors (2003 – June 2008)**

- **Pupils:** 17676 (714 classes)
- **Teachers:** 1764
- **Others:** 6001

**Form (grade)**

- Female
- Male

- University students

**DLR_School_Lab Köln-Porz**

44% Male

56% Female
Scientific Evaluation
IPN (Institute of Didactics of Sciences, Kiel, Germany)

- 90% classify the DLR_School_Labs being “good or excellent”.
- Most pupils would like to come again.
- Pupils feel that they have learned more than during a day at school.
- A single visit of the labs significantly augments the interest in sciences.
- Six weeks after the visit this effect was found to be increased.
Arousing scientific interest in young people

Fascination

Authenticity

Hands-on
Knowledge is...the best way to compete these days
(Enric Banda, Euroscience)