# FACTSHEET “Gender sensitive vocational orientation”

**For vocational orientation and consultation specialists, gender sensitive vocational orientation means …**

… to **critically reflect** their own **ideas, basic assumptions and clichés**.

… to recognize that **societal attributions are relevant for consultation**, since they are **embedded in the basic orientation** of consultants and clients. (see Ewers/Schallert p. 10)

… that gender, diversity, and the underlying **social constructions** at all levels of consultation and vocational orientation have to be **critically reflected** and included in vocational orientation.

… to promote a self-determined vocational orientation and career choice and to support clients to become aware of their interests, skills and knowledge far from assumptions of their environment / society. (see also Ewers/Schallert 2014)

**For vocational orientation and consultation specialists, gender sensitive vocational orientation does NOT mean, that...**

… the aim of consultation/ vocational orientation is to redirect career aspirations of boys and girls. It is neither about **urging girls into typically male professions nor to keep them from learning a typical female profession**. (see Hartmann 2014, p. 21).

Rather, the objective is for young people to deal with their own interests, strengths and skills and with external influences on their career choice. This means, the objective is a **self-determined career choice.**

## Influence factors in the vocational orientation process

* **Own socialization (of education)** – society, teachers, parents (model function, role models in the family, career aspirations for own children/ unfulfilled career aspirations of parents etc.)
* **Peer Group** as substantial guidance of children and youths
* **(Social) media**
* …

**In this context, the following is relevant on a higher systemic level:** Pushing equal opportunity in the educational system with a corresponding education policy, since a segregation process is already coming into force relatively early in the educational career of young people (choosing between technical, social, communicative etc. forms of training / schools).

## Standards of gender sensitive vocational orientation:

**Professional competences:**

* Consultants analyse categories such as gender and recognize that these categories are social attributions / constructs and not “natural” identity markers. (see Ewers/ Schallert p. 16)
* Consultants know the legal situation in Austria concerning discrimination. (see ibid., p. 16)
* Consultants inform themselves about trends in the education and job market (see ibid., p.17)
* Consultants critically question target group oriented (advisory) approaches, since a definition of a target group can be connected with further stigmatisation. (see ibid., p. 17)

**Methodical expertise:**

* Consultants are able to apply metaphors deliberately and targeted (p. ex. the “tent pole” which is carrying everything etc.) (see ibid., p. 19)
* Consultants use language gender-sensitive and non-discrimatory. (see ibid., p. 19)

**Social skills:**

* Consultants develop respectful communication and interaction. (see ibid. p. 20)
* Consultants are able to withstand contradictions and perceive as well as allow irritations and differences. (see ibid. p. 20)
* Consultants cater to clients with openness and curiosity (see ibid. p. 20)
* Consultants question and critically reflect social values, norms and role models. (see ibid. p. 21)

**Personal skills:**

* Critical reflection of the own professional role – self-critical and reflexive work.
* Evaluation of the own methods, images, materials with regards to gender and diversity equity.
* Creating structures for critical reflections and exchange (supervision etc). (see ibid. p. 22ff.)

## Gender sensitive approaches to realisation and consultation

* Orientation towards the clients’ different individual biographies (incl. breaches, transitions etc.).
* Bringing into mind the exemplary and orienting function of women / men in consultation.
* Using gender neutral language.
* Adjusting of consulting time to the clients’ different life situations.
* Addressing women / men aside from common stereotypes (consultation, vocational orientation, educational offers etc.)
* Providing a framework which enables clients to articulate their needs.
* Providing an environment which makes sure to respect the clients’ self-image as well as their personal limits.
* Taking a closer look at the equipment and design of consultation / classrooms (Which statements do pictures, photographs, materials etc. convey?).
* Making categories such as gender a subject of discussion in vocational orientation and consultation without re-codifying these categories. (see ibid., p. 50ff.)

**Sources:**

Ewers, Karin; Schallert, Daniela (2014): Gender- und Diversity-Standards in der Bildungsberatung. Ein Wegweiser. Vienna: abz\*Austria.

Hartmann, Sarah Kristin (2014): Determinanten der gender-sensiblen Einstellung zur Berufsfindung und deren Einfluss auf Wunschberufe – Eine Untersuchung an Schulen der Sekundarstufe 1. Dissertation. Karlsruhe.