

Training as a strategic goal at Destatis¹

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Summary

An ageing society and rapid technological change require lifelong training and excellent education to safeguard “knowledge” as a capital for the future in a knowledge society. Whenever training is discussed, we hear this true statement in some form or other.

In the following, the framework conditions will be presented which have been defined by the Federal Government and taken up and implemented by Destatis to ensure successful training.

What will also be presented are the framework conditions regarding the number of staff members, that is the number of potential training users, and the unit responsible for organisation. Finally, the planning, implementation and follow-up of training will be explained.

1. Outline

The following will be presented and explained below:

2. the framework conditions which have been defined by the Federal Government and taken up and implemented by Destatis to ensure successful training,
3. the framework conditions regarding the number of staff members, that is the number of potential training users, and the unit responsible for organisation,
4. the framework conditions and internal regulations at Destatis,
5. the Strategy and programme plan/development of the annual training programme, the training planning cycle, i.e. the planning, implementation and follow-up of training, and
6. conclusion.

2. Training goal of the Federal Government

In the context of modernising administration, the Federal Government has attached major importance to advanced training and has defined the following principles:

- The most important resource of the public service is its staff. What is of major importance, apart from solid and comprehensive training, is lifelong advanced training. To meet changing requirements and to open up new occupational opportunities, the staff members are obliged to extend their capacities and competence. The Federation offers relevant advanced training.
- Any agency needs a clear advanced training concept. Advanced training is an indispensable element of human resources development and a major management task. Every single manager is responsible for the advanced training of his/her staff members.

3. 2008 basic data on internal training management at Destatis – and main external partners

- 2779 staff members or potential users of training
- 7 staff members of the personnel unit are responsible for training
- 357 internal trainings and workshops with 6120 participants
- about 30 external trainers/advisers
- about 150 internal trainers/lecturers
- on average 4.1 training days per employee

The main subjects focus on:

- courses for new employees
- leadership

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- gender mainstreaming
- information technology (general and statistics-related)
- communication/language courses
- methodology and didactics for trainers
- organisation/project management
- individual work structuring
- media and public relations
- legal framework
- statistics

Apart from internal training activities, the Office's staff can also attend courses offered by our external partners:

- Federal Academy of Public Administration
- corporate training of the statistical offices of the Länder and the Federal Statistical Office of Germany
- ESS Learning and Development Framework (former ESTP)
- Federal Office of Languages

4. The framework conditions and internal regulations at Destatis

The following strategic goals and regulations apply to training at Destatis:

- 4.1 corporate vision
- 4.2 strategic goals (Fit 2012)
- 4.3 human resources management concept
- 4.4 training guidelines
- 4.5 staff satisfaction survey

Based on these principles, training at Destatis is defined as a strategic goal and is subject to formal arrangements. Destatis has specified its strategic goals and the relevant regulations in line with the EFQM Excellence Model of the European Foundation for Quality Management. The purpose is to ensure demand-oriented training, a structured training programme, efficient use of funds for training, and the users' involvement in and acceptance of the training programme.

4.1 Corporate vision

A criterion of the overall model is the development of a corporate vision to include all relevant aspects of the aspired corporate culture of an institution (communication, appearance, conduct). Thus it reflects the philosophy of the institution (concept of the society, concept of man, standards and values) and the intended corporate objectives, and it defines the strategies designed to reach these objectives.

The fact that the Federal Statistical Office's corporate vision includes the regular and goal-oriented training of all staff members as an essential precondition for a successful accomplishment of its tasks underlines the importance of advanced training as a strategic tool.

The text of the 1998 corporate vision is preceded by the following sentences: "Destatis is Germany's largest information provider. Its products are widely appreciated. The Office's competence is the result of the work of its highly qualified staff. The challenges of the information society require continuous development".

Under the heading "How do we treat each other?", the corporate vision underlines that the professional and personal development of all staff is promoted through goal-oriented qualification measures and regular conversations with the staff members.

4.2 Strategic goals "Fit 2012"

In the context of the long-term strategic goals, examples are listed of the activities which should be undertaken to achieve the superordinate goals of short-term (annual) programme planning. It should be emphasised in this context that employees of all Destatis departments and hierarchical levels were involved in the process of defining the Office's long-term strategic goals.

So far, all updated versions of the Destatis strategic goals (currently Fit 2012) have considered the importance of advanced training for the Office's development.

The 5th goal (We are prepared for 2012) reads:

- “All of us take an active part in continuously developing our competencies ...
- We, the executives, are additionally responsible for actively and continuously developing our leadership qualities ...
- We, the heads of the Office, also see to it that sustainable human resources development is ensured ...”

Including training in both the corporate vision and the strategic goals is not a mere declaration of intent. The corporate vision as such stipulates that any employee can refer to its principles.

Based on its strategic goals, Destatis has defined the activities and projects to be undertaken by 2012. As all staff members were involved in the definition of the goals, each of them can demand compliance with the goals and, at the same time, is obliged to implement these objectives.

4.3 Human resources management concept (HRMC)

Human resources development, which is part of the Office’s corporate culture, is a systematic and continuous process to recognise, maintain and foster the individual performance and learning potential of the staff at all hierarchical levels. This general definition, which refers to the main objectives of human resources development, was supplemented by the following concrete statement in the 2003 Destatis human resources management concept: The goal is to maintain and raise the levels of qualification among the staff. Only in this way can the challenges be met which will have to be faced by official statistics in the future.

The Destatis HRMC, which comprises a total of 10 modules, includes advanced training provisions in module no. 4 (Staff appraisal interviews and individual planning of advanced training). It is stated there expressly that individual advanced training plans must be prepared².

4.4 Training guidelines

The Destatis advanced training procedures are specified in the 2003 training guidelines that are binding for all Destatis staff.

The following guidelines should be noted in this context:

- Requirement to undergo advanced training – Superiors are obliged to support employees during job familiarisation periods and in advanced training courses and activities aimed at raising their level of qualification. Superiors need to see to it that employees fulfil their obligation to participate in professional training activities regularly and to the extent required.
- New employees are required to attend introduction training courses in the context of which they obtain information about the tasks, products, organisational structure and mode of work of Destatis.
- Special promotion courses are designed to prepare employees for fulfilling more challenging tasks or assuming a management position.
- All staff members who are engaged in personnel management tasks are obliged to attend courses for managerial staff at least at three-year intervals. Assuming a management position for the first time presupposes the participation in a minimum of three courses.
- There are specific courses on offer for women with families, part-time employees, persons on leave, teleworkers and severely disabled persons.

4.5 Staff satisfaction survey

The Destatis staff satisfaction survey regularly includes questions about skills and career opportunities. The answers are analysed to obtain information on the spectrum of opinions regarding these issues, which is important in order to decide whether conceptual changes should be implemented.

The 2009 staff satisfaction survey included the following questions and associated ratings:

-“The courses of the FSO’s training programme are good for the enhancement of my skills.”
51% fully agree; 32% agree; 16% do not agree.

-“My own views about enhancing my professional skills correspond to the views of my superiors.”
66% fully agree; 25% agree; 9% do not agree.

² Detailed explanation see 5.1

5. Strategy and programme plan/development of the annual training programme, planning cycle

Based on the strategic goals, every department and every division in a department defines its own goals and the measures to be taken in the coming year to achieve these goals.

After the goals and measures have been examined by the Office's cross-section departments responsible for organisation, budget and IT issues, the top management decides on the goals and measures which should actually be achieved and implemented.

Training is an integral component, which is considered in the annual programme and budget planning processes at Destatis.

The annual training planning cycle comprises the following six phases:

- 5.1 survey of training needs with special focus on the staff appraisal interviews and individual planning of advanced training
- 5.2 specification of the training programme
- 5.3 publication of the training programme
- 5.4 applications
- 5.5 delivering of training
- 5.6 evaluation / follow up

5.1 User demand analysis

At the beginning of a year, an overview of all training activities of that year and a description of their content are made available to all employees. In addition, advanced training courses are announced on the internet and by the Office's training coordinators.

The so-called staff appraisal interviews, which are conducted by superiors with each member of their staff at least once a year, provide the basis for the training demand analysis. A compulsory component of these interviews is the preparation of individual training plans. This is laid down in the Destatis training guidelines. The general intention is that all employees attend training courses during at least three days per year as a long-term average. For that purpose it is necessary to compile an individual training, which can be attended in the next year. The training intentions are laid down in writing using a form especially drafted for that purpose.

In the context of a staff appraisal interview, the superior discusses with his/her staff member whether the courses selected are necessary for and suited to promote his/her personal development and/or professional activity. Finally, the superior and the staff member agree on the activities to be listed. In accordance with the time schedule of planning the advanced training courses, all staff appraisal interviews should be completed by 30 June of a year.

5.2 Specification of the training programme

An individual training plan comprises several courses and an associated order of priority. It is recommended that several courses should be selected to increase the chances of participation. The Staff department (Training unit) uses the information about participation in seminars and courses given in the individual training plans as a basis for determining the actual number of course participants. Proposals regarding new courses are also taken into consideration. The types and number of courses which can finally be offered depend on the budget available for the training programme. The decision on the budget made available for training purposes is taken by the top management in the context of the annual programme planning meeting which takes place in autumn of each year.

5.3 Preparation of the annual training programme

The results of the above enquiries provide the basis for determining the topics and number of courses to be conducted. In addition, the trainers are selected and commissioned. Together with the trainers, the target groups (participants) and the goals of the individual courses are specified. These processes are followed by organisational activities including, for instance, the booking of seminar rooms and specification of seminar times. In this context, a special focus is on planning IT courses as they require the availability of both adequate technology in the training classrooms and in-house trainers to conduct the courses. Purchases of new IT equipment for training purposes require the prior permission of the heads of the Office and due consideration in the Destatis budgetary plan.

5.4 Publication of the training programme

The main medium for publishing the training programme is the intranet. If changes occur in the programme, the training coordinators will be duly informed. They, in turn, pass on the information to the participants concerned. At the beginning of a year, the Advanced training unit provides each employee with what is called an individual training survey which indicates the courses he/she can attend during that year.

5.5 Application/invitation/delivery of training

About six weeks before a course is held, the participants receive an invitation including detailed information about the content and organisation of the course. As regards new training activities which are offered at short notice and were not known at the time the individual training plans were prepared, employees can apply for participation in addition to the courses listed in their training plans. An employee can cancel his/her participation in a training course for which he/she has been registered only for serious reasons. The employee who intends to cancel his/her participation has to submit, through his/her superior, a written notice to the Advanced training unit. Also, a substitute of the relevant department should be named.

Each participant in an advanced training activity receives a certificate of attendance which is included in his/her personal file. The certificate contains information about the type, duration and topics of the course attended.

5.6 Evaluation/follow up

At the end of each training course, the participants receive a printed questionnaire to assess, in an anonymous form, the training activity. In addition, a final (verbal) discussion takes place which is headed by a representative from the Advanced training unit. Trainers assess the courses in separate questionnaires. The results of both the questionnaires and the final discussion are analysed by the Advanced training unit to provide an overall assessment which is then discussed with the trainers involved in the relevant activities. The aforementioned unit draws conclusions from the results obtained in order to ensure a continuous enhancement of the training activities offered.

Finally, the way in which a participant profited from a given course should be discussed between the employee and his/her superior.

6. Conclusion

On the one hand, advanced training is a vehicle to meet the demand which results from human resources development schemes. And on the other, advanced training is an integral part of personnel development which consists of a range of modules.

However, human resources development can only be efficient if its individual modules coincide with the real needs of an institution, i.e. if they are specified and formulated in accordance with these requirements. Right from the beginning, special attention should therefore be paid to transparency for all staff and, if possible, to their involvement in the relevant processes of introducing and enhancing the individual modules.

It should also be noted that human resources development is a process which, on the one hand, requires each employee to participate in training measures and, on the other, entitles him/her to make use of the associated personnel development opportunities.

If an office includes advanced training in its corporate vision and strategic goals, it cannot but offer high-standard training to its employees who are at the same time entitled to participate in such training activities.

Engaging the staff in specifying an office's strategic goals, giving them the chance both to propose new topics for courses (staff appraisal interviews) and to evaluate the training activities in the context of a staff opinion survey are just a few of the opportunities to ensure active staff participation in designing advanced training schemes.

The aim of preparing and publishing training guidelines is to ensure transparency and to underline their binding nature.

All in all, the above measures contribute to an increasing willingness among the staff to upgrade their skills and to an appreciation of the courses offered.