

Weiberwirtschaft, a cooperative of women for the setting up of women's businesses in Berlin

By Dr. Günther Lorenz – Technologie-Netzwerk Berlin e.V.



“When the property will be completely owned by WeiberWirtschaft, we will invest more in the future of women. We don't want equal but ideal chances for women in business! Every woman is welcome in the co-operative.”

<https://weiberwirtschaft.de/home/>

Women's Business Center

- Wilhelminian style property in the center of Berlin
- Close to public transport
- 7.100 qm of space for offices, studios, workshops, shops, restaurants, lofts, also flats
- Rooms range from 14 qm to 220 qm
- A widely noticed example of an ecologically reconstructed and run business center

Organisation

- 1.750 women from Germany and beyond are members and share-holders
- Every woman welcome!
- One vote per person on the yearly general assembly
- Shares = equity capital
- Investment of 18,4 Million € between 1992 and 1996 for purchase and reconstruction
- In that: 41 % nonrecurring financial support from state and 56 % loans
- No current public funding!

- WeiberWirtschaft is a company and gains revenue only from letting commercial spaces
- Every tenant must buy one co-operative share and thus become a member of the co-operative (one-time investment of only 103 €)

Rental Fees an Infrastructure

- Reasonable rental fees 3 €/qm (studio) to 11 €/qm (shop)
- Subsidised “Milchmädchentarife” in the first half year after starting up for new tenants: 50 % reduction 1st-6th month, 25 % 7th-12th month
- Very low running costs due to ecological equipment (own solar energy etc.)
- Companies can move within center
- Mix of trades
- 65 women-run companies and nonprofit organisations
- Conference area for workshops and meetings
- Restaurant and café with inexpensive lunch
- Kindergarden for 10 months to 6 year-olds at low cost, open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., guaranteed for every mother who rents a room
- Rights of participation: tenants codetermine who moves in
- Mediation commission “Klärwerk”
- WeiberWirtschaft team inside: 3 fully employed and 6 part-time employees and a trainee looking after property issues, the conference area and public relations for WeiberWirtschaft property and co-operative

Image and Networking

- Know-how Transfer; exchange with other entrepreneurs; many possibilities to co-operate and participate
- Positive public image, e.g. 2004 NABU award for ecological engineering 2005 award “Courage-Maker of the Nation” Berlin 2006 chosen for the campaign “365 places in the land of ideas” (Germany) 2008 The Prize of the Regions of the Congress of the Council of Europe
- 2006 new project “Gründerinnenzentrale”: contact point for Berlin women who need orientation and information on how to become self-employed (funding by Berlin and the European Social Fund)
- Since July 2006 in charge for Berlin in the interregional German women start-up support network “bundesweite gründerinnenagentur” (bga)
- 2013: In cooperation with the Goldrausch e.V., WeiberWirtschaft eG establishes a microcredit offer for its members (1,000 to 10,000 EUR)

Perspectives

- Continue to buy the property (regular instalments) with the help of share-buyers
- Each share is being used to redeem the bank loan and to widen the freedom for new projects