RemoteHeR · Module 3 case study · Germany

MODULE 3 CASE STUDY · GERMANY

The dashboard that was meant to say yes

Tinted Glass Services. One situation, four national versions. This is the Germany version.



DRAFT – partner review

Drafted for Paderborn University to review. National detail must be checked by a partner in this country before publication.

The situation

You work in the HR team at Tinted Glass Services, a company of about 350 people. Since April, the company has used an AI-supported screening tool to shortlist candidates for Customer Support Specialist roles. The tool reads every application, gives each one a match score, and passes the top-scoring applications to a recruiter.

Lena, the Head of Customer Support, championed the tool. She has asked you for a one-page dashboard for next month's management meeting. Her words were: "Show them it has made hiring faster. Then we can roll it out to every vacancy."

You have pulled two extracts from the applicant tracking system. Neither of them says what Lena hoped.

What the extracts show	Before the tool (Oct to Mar)	With the tool (Apr to Sep)
Completed hires, Customer Support	11	12
Average time-to-hire for completed hires	28 days	34 days
Applications received	212	231
Applications passed by screening	74, by recruiters	52, by the tool
Records with a missing or duplicate field	9	17

There is a second extract from the tool itself. It splits the applications screened since April by whether the CV shows a gap of more than a year in employment.

Applicant group	Applications	Passed screening	Rate

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CV shows a gap of more than a year	58	6	you calculate
No gap of more than a year	173	46	you calculate
All	231	52	you calculate

- The supplier's brochure says the tool "learns from your best past hires". Nobody at Tinted Glass has asked what that means.
- One rejected applicant, Ana, has written: "Was my application rejected by a computer? I have six years of customer service experience, before I took time out to care for my mother."
- An employee representative has heard about the roll-out and asked HR, in writing, how the tool works and who checks it.
- Lena's last message: "Keep it simple. One page. The meeting is on the 14th."

All figures are fictional

The company, the people and every number in this case study are invented for practice. They are small, deliberately, so that you can calculate them by hand. Treat them with the same care you would treat real data: they have limits, and part of the task is to say what those are.

What this case study is for

Everything in Module 3 meets one real constraint here. You read the data honestly (3.3, 3.4), you question the tool's output instead of using it (3.5, 3.6), you trace where candidates were lost (3.1), and you decide what the tool is actually for (3.2). The same situation plays out differently in each country, and that difference is the point.

What is different in Germany

Before you use any of this

National detail below is a starting point for your own checking, not legal advice. Law changes, and duties differ by company size, sector agreement and the date you read this. Verify the current position for your country before acting on any of it. Module 6 covers how to do that properly.

What applies in all four countries

What to check	Why it matters here
The GDPR rules on automated decisions (Article 22) and on what candidates must be told (Articles 13 to 15)	If a decision about Ana was based solely on automated processing, extra rules apply. Candidates also have a right to meaningful information about automated

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	decision-making. Ask your data protection officer whether a person really reviewed the screening, and what Ana must be told.
Whether the tool is a high-risk AI system under the EU AI Act	AI used to filter applications and evaluate candidates is listed in the Act's high-risk category. As the organisation using it, you have duties, including human oversight and informing workers' representatives. Check which obligations already apply on the date you read this: the timetable has been under discussion.
A data protection impact assessment (DPIA)	New technology that scores people at scale is the kind of processing for which a DPIA is usually expected. Ask your data protection officer whether one exists, and whether it covered this use.

Employee representation: Works council (Betriebsrat)

What to check	Why it matters here
Is there a works council?	If so, it is not an audience but a partner. The Works Constitution Act gives the works council rights over technical systems that can monitor performance or behaviour, over selection guidelines (Auswahlrichtlinien) and, since 2021, explicitly over the use of AI. A tool that decides who passes screening may need its agreement before it is used at all. Check with the works council and a labour lawyer.
Is a works agreement (Betriebsvereinbarung) needed?	Introducing HR software is often governed by a works agreement. Negotiating one takes weeks, not days, and Lena's meeting is on the 14th. Plan the timetable backwards from that.
Does the screening comply with the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG)?	The AGG protects applicants, not only employees. Check whether a criterion that disadvantages career gaps could connect to a protected ground. The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes) publishes guidance and gives advice.
Who answers data protection questions?	Your company data protection officer (Datenschutzbeauftragte) first. Supervision sits with the data protection authority of the federal state; for Paderborn that is North Rhine-Westphalia's.

How the conversation itself differs

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- Expect detailed, documented questions. "The supplier says it is fair" will be challenged, in writing, and you should be ready to show what you checked.
- Rolling a tool out before the works council has agreed is one of the most damaging things you can do here, and a common mistake by managers in a hurry.
- A dashboard that states its limits plainly is more credible in a German management meeting, not less. Precision is read as competence.

What you are asked to do

1. Calculate the screening pass rate for each group, and the difference in percentage points.
2. Draft the one-page dashboard for the management meeting: four indicators at most, each with a plain-language reading and one line on what it does not show.
3. Write the three sentences you would say to Lena before the meeting, evidence first, limit second, next question third.
4. List what must be checked, and who must be involved, before the tool is used for any other vacancy in your country.
5. Draft a short, plain-language reply to Ana that explains the role the tool played and where a person was involved.

Questions to answer

- Time-to-hire went up. Does the data show that the tool caused it? What else changed between the two periods?
- Fewer applications passed screening with the tool. Is that a problem, an improvement, or not yet known? What would tell you?
- The pass rates for the two groups differ. Which of the three ways bias enters (training data, proxy variables, filter design) could explain it here?
- "Learns from your best past hires." What would you ask the supplier, and why does the answer matter for Ana?
- Lena wants a yes. What do you put on the dashboard, and what do you refuse to put on it?
- If the roll-out goes ahead and a candidate complains, who answers for the decision?

Read one other country's version

When you have finished, read the version for one country other than Germany. Write two or three lines: what would you have to do differently there, and which of those differences is legal rather than cultural? Add the lines to your notes. If your course group has a forum, you may share them there too, but nothing in this case study requires another person.

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Before you finish

- ☐ Both pass rates and the gap between them are calculated, with the counts behind them
- ☐ Every indicator on your dashboard has a line saying what it does not show
- ☐ Your message to Lena reports the slower time-to-hire honestly and does not blame the tool without evidence
- ☐ You named who must be consulted or informed in your country before any roll-out, and how you would check
- ☐ Your reply to Ana explains what the tool did and where a person decided, in plain words
- ☐ You read one other country's version and named one legal and one cultural difference



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