MODULE 5 CASE STUDY · GERMANY

The starter who said everything was fine



Lindenhof Lernen GmbH, Leipzig. One situation, four national versions. This is the Germany version.

The situation

Lindenhof Lernen GmbH is an online training company of about 45 people. Its head office is in Leipzig, and most staff work from home. You are the only HR person. The People team is you and a part-time payroll colleague.

Jana joins as a fully remote People Administrator. She works 35 hours a week from her home in Chemnitz. Her manager is Claudia, Head of Operations. Her buddy is Sabine, from the support team. The support team also includes Inês, who works from Braga, Portugal, one hour behind of head office.

Weeks 0 to 2 · a start that slipped

- Jana signed her contract three weeks before day one. Nobody contacted her again until the Friday before she started.
- Her laptop arrived on the Wednesday of week one. She spent two days reading the staff handbook on her phone.
- Her written terms arrived on day nine. Nobody had checked which deadline applies.
- Sabine was named as her buddy on a form. By day 45 they had never met on video.

Day 45 · a thread in the team channel

Part of Jana's job is a handover note for the support team at the end of her day. Inês starts earlier, and picks up what the note lists. On day 45, at the start of Inês's day, she posts in the team channel: “No handover again. Twelve requests with no owner.” Jana replies four hours later, in public: “Maybe check the shared folder before counting my mistakes.” Two colleagues react. Nobody takes it out of the thread.

Day 60 · the checkpoint

At the day-60 checkpoint, Claudia tells you that three handover notes were missing in two weeks, and that two staff questions to the HR inbox waited four days. Jana says: “Everything is fine. It's just a busy month.” Her camera is off. In the same week her messages start arriving after 22:00.

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A week later, in a call with you about the handover, Jana says that her father had a stroke last month. She does his mornings before she logs on, and she is barely sleeping. She asks you not to tell Claudia.

Two more questions

- Jana asks whether the company pays anything towards her electricity and internet, because nobody has told her.
- She has also heard that a colleague with the same role who lives in Berlin is paid more. She asks you why.

What this case study is for

Every lesson in Module 5 meets this one situation: the pre-boarding that did not happen (5.1), a team that does not connect (5.2), work that slipped (5.3), a wellbeing concern that goes beyond your role (5.4), a conflict that grew in public (5.5), and a question about costs and pay (5.6). The events are the same in all four countries. What you must check, and who you ask, is not.

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. Laws change, and rules differ by company size, sector and collective agreement. Verify the current position before acting on any of it. Module 6 covers how to do that properly.

Written terms and mobile work

What to check	Who to ask, and why it matters here
Which form and deadline apply to the written terms under the Nachweisgesetz, as it stands today?	Ask your employment lawyer. The rules on form have changed recently; check before you rely on email. Jana's terms arrived on day nine.
Is there a works council (Betriebsrat)? Mobile work, monitoring tools, surveys and appraisal criteria can be subject to co-determination.	If there is one, involve it before you change how work is organised or measured.
What does the company agreement or contract say about equipment and home-working costs?	HR and payroll. Check the current tax treatment with a tax adviser before you answer Jana.

Wellbeing, care and support routes

What to check	Who to ask, and why it matters here
Does the risk assessment (Gefährdungsbeurteilung)	The safety specialist and the company doctor

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under the Arbeitsschutzgesetz include psychological strain, and does it cover people working from home?	(Betriebsarzt). Prevention at source is a legal duty.
How does an employee reach the company doctor, and is the conversation confidential?	The Betriebsarzt. Know the route before you need it.
Is 116 123 in service in Germany, at what hours and in which languages?	Check before you name it. If a life is at risk, the number is 112.
What carers' leave and flexible working for carers does national law give? Check the transposition of Directive (EU) 2019/1158.	Your employment lawyer, or the health insurer's information for carers.

Pay

What to check	Who to ask, and why it matters here
Has Germany transposed the Pay Transparency Directive (EU) 2023/970, and how does it relate to the existing pay-transparency law?	Your employment lawyer. Jana can ask why pay differs from the colleague in Berlin.

How it may differ in practice

- Expect the works council, where there is one, to treat consultation as a real step, not a formality.
- Written records and clear procedures are often expected. Say early what will be written down, and who will see it.
- These are tendencies to check, not rules about people. Ask the person, not the stereotype.

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What you are asked to do

1. Fix the onboarding. Write the pre-boarding, day-one and week-one lines that would have prevented weeks 0 to 2, each with an owner and a date (lesson 5.1).
2. Repair the buddy arrangement and the team's connection. Name one change and one indicator you would check at day 90 (lessons 5.1 and 5.2).
3. Rewrite the day-60 feedback on the missing handovers and the slow HR inbox as situation, behaviour and impact, with a next step and a date (lesson 5.3).
4. Decide whether her disclosure needs a conversation, a referral, or neither. Write what you would say, which routes you would name, and what you would tell the manager (lesson 5.4).
5. Plan the next step on the thread with the colleague: a conversation, a facilitated conversation or mediation, or a formal process (lesson 5.5).
6. Draft a short reply to her questions about home-working costs and pay, using only what you have checked (lesson 5.6).

Questions to answer

- Which single pre-boarding step, with an owner and a date, would have changed most about her first week?
- Which signs before day 60 should have prompted someone to ask how she was, and who should have asked?
- At what point does this stop being a conversation about handovers and become one you must refer? What do you say at that point?
- She asked you not to tell her manager. What will you share, with her agreement, and what stays private?
- Should the thread with her colleague go to an informal conversation, to mediation, or to a formal process? What would change your answer?
- What must you check in your country before you answer her questions about home-working costs and pay, and who do you ask?

Read one other country's version

When you have finished, read the version for one other country. In your own notes, write three or four lines: what would you have to do differently there, and which difference is legal rather than cultural? You do this alone. If you want to, you can also share it in the module forum, but nothing here depends on it.

Before you finish

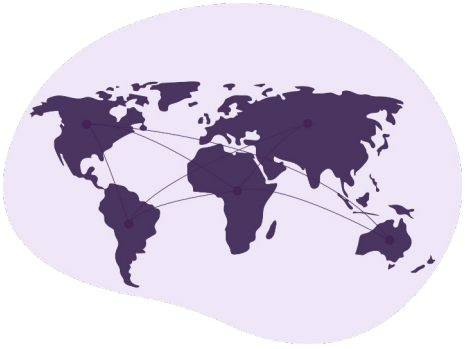
☐ Every onboarding line you wrote has an owner and a date

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- ☐ Your feedback names dated facts and a next step, and contains no guesses about her private life
- ☐ You said where you would stop and refer, and named routes without diagnosing
- ☐ Health details stay private unless she agrees, and you did not promise total secrecy
- ☐ Your national answers say what to check and who to ask, not what the law is
- ☐ You read one other country's version and noted one legal and one cultural difference



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