

BUSINESS ENGLISH

These units are intended for German-speaking students who wish to improve their command of Business English. They are the result of my teaching at various universities, consultancies or companies. All units are freely available for study but copyright.

Abbreviations used are: **e.g.** = *exempli gratia* (Latin), for example, for instance, and **i.e.** = *id est* (Latin), that is, that means. German translations are usually in brackets.

Solutions for the translation exercise of Unit 4

- 1 Both parties signed the maintenance contract this morning.
- 2 The judge will give/pronounce the verdict tomorrow.
- 3 The company will sue us/take us to court for the broken pipes.
- 4 The prosecutor has several witnesses for the fraud case.
- 5 Several executives were interviewed by police.

Unit 5: The Language of Business Meetings

Meetings are a regular part of business life and have their own set of rules and expressions. Similar to the structure of the supervisory board already described in Unit 2, each meeting will have somebody directing or **chairing** the meeting, the **chair**, **chairperson**, or still often the **chairman**. There will be an **agenda** (Tagesordnung), i.e. a list of points or **items** (Tagesordnungspunkte) to be discussed in the meeting. Items may be added to or deleted (or taken off) from the agenda. First it needs to be established whether or not the group of people present has **reached quorum** (Stimmfähigkeit erreichen), that is the minimum number of people required to be present for the meeting to be able to vote on any point of the agenda.

Next the chair will present any **apologies for absence** for those who cannot participate in the meeting. The chair will also have to ask if everybody has received, read and agreed to the last meeting's **minutes** (Protokoll) and appoint someone **to take the minutes** (Protokoll schreiben) for the current meeting. They are called minutes because they will record the precise beginning and end of the meeting. If the minutes have not been circulated beforehand or several

people have not read them, they might be read aloud by someone to make sure that everybody has the same level of information.

Then discussion will begin about the various items on the agenda, with the chair saying something such as *I'd like to give the floor to Jennifer to tell us about...* *To give the floor to ...* is an expression for *to give somebody permission to speak*.

It may come to a vote about anyone of the items on the agenda, i.e. a decision needs to be taken. There can be an **open ballot** (offene Abstimmung), also called a **show of hands**, or a **secret ballot** (geheime Abstimmung). The chair may ask who is **in favour of** (für) or **against** (gegen) doing what has been proposed. People who are undecided may **abstain** (sich enthalten), their votes are called **abstentions** (Enthaltungen). If there is a **tie** (Unentschieden) the chair has a so-called **casting vote** (entscheidende Stimme), which will then be the deciding one.

At the end of the agenda is an item called **AOB** which stands for **Any Other Business** (Verschiedenes). If there is nothing left to be discussed, a date for the next meeting will be agreed on and the meeting will then be closed.

Translation exercise

1 Könntest Du bitte das Protokoll schreiben?

2 Hat jeder das Protokoll des letzten Treffens erhalten und gelesen?

3 Ich bin dafür, aber wir müssen es auch in den Vertrag reinnehmen.

4 Wie sollten über diese Übernahme in einer geheimen Abstimmung entscheiden, der Punkt ist sehr wichtig.

5 Peter wird später dazu kommen.