



The EUROPEAN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 Issue 2 May 2011

TIME Associates, Northern Ireland, are the lead partner in the European Employer of Choice (EEoC), Leonardo da Vinci Project that runs from October 2010–October 2012

Initial Research Shows Potential for European Employer of Choice

Over the last five months each EEoC partner organisation has carried out comprehensive research, in their respective country, to identify the potential for EEoC and address the critical success factors required for successful transfer of the EEoC package to Italy, Germany, Hungary and Romania. All partners followed an agreed structured approach to research which combined

Project Summary

EEoC is a practical programme of support for organisations to improve business performance through achieving a positive, inclusive approach to managing a diverse workforce in a constantly changing workplace environment.

Lead Partner



TIME Associates (N. Ireland)
www.timeireland.com

Partners

HBZHandwerkskammer

Bildungszentrum GmbH (Germany)

www.hbz-bildung.de

Antares(Italy)

www.antareseuropa.it

Supra Vita Language Studio (SVLS)(Hungary)

www.supravita.hu

Centre for Advanced Technologies
(CTANM)(Romania)

www.ctanm.pub.ro

- Review of policy, published literature and statistic
- Analysis of current programmes and interventions addressing diversity and wellbeing in the workplace
- Identification of barriers and cultural issues that need addressed to facilitate successful EEoC transfer to each partner country
- Seek the opinion of local experts and stakeholders through the management of a Local Reference Group.

General Research Observations

The combined results of this research (which for the purpose of this newsletter focuses on the need for an EEoC programme in the partner countries) is very encouraging and strongly conclude that while there is a definite need for a practical programme of support offered by EEoC there is no similar product available in the partner countries that support organisations to improve business performance through adopting a positive, inclusive and client led approach to managing diversity and employee well being / work life balance in a constantly changing workplace.

Furthermore products available in the market place of the partner countries that address employee health and well being and Diversity Management within organisations

1. are mainly targeted at large companies and public sector organisations and therefore do not necessarily reflect the needs of a typical SME and micro owner/manager who in many instances are legally obliged to consider the health and well being of their workforce



2. do not include identification of base line data on which to build meaningful tailored support for organisations (ie do not include diversity audit, employee survey and benchmarking offered through EEOC)
3. tend to be generic, "of the shelf" type programmes that do not offer client focussed support (ie action planning and implementation element of the EEOC) to enable owner/managers to address priority requirements that will have a real and lasting impact on their own business performance.

Partner Country Research Some Observations



Italy

Antares in their research conclude that there are several factors that support the need of EEOC model in Italy including :

- **The economic crisis period** – EEOC will support organisations to positively address the implications of employment uncertainty caused by the current economic downturn including employee stress, decreased motivation, reduced productivity and poor employer/employee relations.
- **Reduced power of trade unions to directly address employee wellbeing as a priority.** EEOC represents a potential innovative and much required tool for organisations to focus on addressing employee health and wellbeing
- **Increased Employee Expectations**, EEOC can be a powerful tool for company management to positively influence staff retention by promoting employee loyalty to through developing an inclusive workplace where employees feel valued and respected by the company.
- **The importance of Micro Business in Italy.** More than the 90% of Italian companies have 10 workers or less. The use of EEOC as a model to support a healthy, happy and productive workforce in micro business will address an existing gap for tailored, relevant work life balance interventions for small and micro business who traditionally have not experienced such structured support.

- **The new rules to foster public administration productivity.** Recent changes in legalisation on the optimisation of Public Administration productivity will mean that the tools from EEOC will be of great importance also in the public sector although public bodies may still now adopt a good on line Wellbeing Kit, tailored in 2005 on their features.
- **The new law concerning safety and health in workplace** - the EEOC project is placed in a favourable period in Italy with respect to new legislation regarding the inclusion of prevention of work-related stress among the risks to be assessed in order to follow the new law on work safety to which all companies must adapt.



Germany

German Partner HBZ have a particular specialism in supporting business with less than 10 staff. Their focus during this project is to adapt the EEOC products to specifically suit the user group and support them to embed "supporting diversity and work-life balance" into the company identity. As with the other partner companies German large and medium sized companies have opportunities to participate on work-life balance type initiatives, there is no similar type initiatives in place for the micro company. HBZ's research have defined the innovative aspect of the project for SMEs as

- With preservation of personnel you have got less employee fluctuation and thereby you keep more know how in the enterprise.
- With reduction of stress factors you can rise up the efficiency and achieve higher concentration.
- Less absence due to illness
- Successful Personnel recruitment because quite a few potential employee will value a company that promotes work-life-balance.
- Increasing of productivity by more motivation and more customer satisfaction.
- High economical benefit for enterprises with work-life-balance.
- Cost-benefit-analysis
- In the long term the costs are lower than the costs through absent times and fluctuation.

Germany has a very specific national security law. This includes social insurance as a right to occupational rehabilitation after a long-term illness. The employer has to create a rehabilitation programme for the returning employee. The EEOC programme can help to create and implement these programmes.



Hungary

In Hungary there are a number of factors which demonstrate the need for an EEOC type intervention to address the inherent requirement for employers to offer employees non financial benefits and rewards to address the imbalances between the increases in the cost of living changes.

The outcomes of recent research (Hewitt Associates, 23,858 employees across Hungary) clearly demonstrate factors that EEOC seeks to address eg 54% of employees operating at managerial level struggle with achieving a balance between their work and home life, 24% of these respondents further report that they would prefer more free time to a pay increase; only 38% of employee interviewed felt valued by their employer and only 40% felt involved in meaningful decision making at any level within the company.

The new law concerning safety and health in workplace has placed the onus on the employer to address the psychosocial risk factors at the workplace. Health promotion and stress management at work have received attention at multinational companies mostly, while smaller enterprises face difficulties with respect to stress-related risk assessment and stress management due to the shortage of capital and free practical guidelines. EEOC may provide a suitable tool for SMEs to address this.

- Attractiveness and the ability to keep employees,
- Complimentary copy of the summary of research findings,
- Benchmark of practices with companies regionally,
- Customized Employee Satisfaction tool and results aligned to company need,
- Access to Best Practices.

For more information on research carried out by partners please visit www.euro-eoc.eu

Something is on the move..



Ragni and Delia Zingarelli, ANTARES, Rome

(a summary of a recent study on employee welfare in Lombardia, Italy edited by Pietro Ragni and Delia Zingarelli, ANTARES, Rome)

The Assolombarda (an important association of enterprises in Lombardia within Confindustria, the major Italian entrepreneurs' union) and the three major Italian trade unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL) presented on the 14th of February 2011 a study on the regional enterprise's system: "Il lavoro a Milano" (Working in Milan). 400 enterprises in Milan and in all the Region Lombardia were involved; among the topics were the services offered by the enterprise for the wellbeing of the employees. 35% of the interviewed declares they have already introduced one or more services to support their employees.

The majority of the entrepreneurs think that employee welfare helps to enhance the employees' commitment while giving them support to meet their needs. The more widespread services are: supplementary healthcare insurance (24% of the enterprises); vaccinations (17%); personal check-up (16%); bank and/or insurance conventions (16%); travel agencies conventions (13%); shuttle-bus for those who are living far from the plant (12%) and then also: fitness gym discounts, training courses for the free time, childcare centres. This kind of services are offered mainly by the larger enterprises and the strategy



Romania

In Romania at present, the "Employer of Choice" concept is reduced to studies performed by marketing companies on people searching for a job and not on actual employees from the studied companies. In these studies, companies are ranked following outsiders' perception and not using an objective evaluation. Companies are presenting themselves as "Employer of Choice" following an extremely simple self-evaluation. There are related international studies like Best Employers Study made by Hewitt but there is no organized framework for assigning the "Employer of Choice" label.

Present research completed by CTANM about introducing the European Employer of Choice concept in Romania unveiled interest and positive reaction from stakeholders - the key reasons given include

- A Powerful Employer Branding Tool,

to offer a combination of healthcare and wellbeing services is a spontaneous way to react to the lower public support. But it is interesting also to report the SMEs' experiences, in many cases is the entrepreneur who pays directly some costs to give services and support to the employees working in his enterprise.

Emerging themes for work life balance in the context of Northern Ireland by Martin Magennis, TIME Associates

Work and life

How important is work to us now in Northern Ireland? What's in place in relation to family and community life at present? Have we got the balance right, or do we all need to fundamentally rethink the relationship?

The changing workforce

One thing that many observers agree on is that the workforce of tomorrow is going to be different. Fathers, older workers, lone parents and carers are just some of the groups who are looking for change today, and who will certainly shape tomorrow. Some of these changes are demographic – with an aging population (and the shortfall in pension funds) older workers will increasingly be participating in the workforce. Carers too, will be a larger population of workers and the figures are compelling – nine million in the UK will be carers in the future. So addressing carers' needs is not an option, but essential to continued economic success. There are also social pressures which will change the workforce in the future. Men would take much more time off work in the UK if only their families could afford it. We are engineering men out of the home and women out of the workplace.

This is beginning to change although progress may be slow. The indications are that there will be stiff resistance to any legislative measures which offer men and women equal time out of the workplace for childcare, for example. Must we wait another generation for the

CONTACT US

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON EEoC CONTACT:

Louise Heaney, EEoC Project Manager
TIME Associates, 8 Elmwood Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6AY
T 028 9066 7557 E louise@timeireland.com

young people, who claim to value work-life balance highly enough to make it a significant factor in their choice of career, to stick to their guns when they become employees and create the pressure for change? Or do we need a more concerted policy pressure now, to change how we design and advertise jobs so that part time and flexible options become widely available?

Employers

Employers will need to have an understanding of the journey that they will make in the future. What some have already recognised is the need to engage and move with the changing lives of their employees is vital. Working with the grain of employees' aspirations, family circumstances and changing cultural expectations is how they see themselves in future. It is employers who are preparing for the future now who will be most successful. The new generation of workers are different. Their comfort with change and natural expectation of choice also means that if they really get it wrong, they are ready to walk away from you much faster than future generations, who grew up in the old job for life tradition. It will be those companies who really engage with and understand their employees who will be the best equipped to prosper in an economy, where, increasingly, your people are your advantage. The huge weight of employment culture and practice, built up over generations, will make progress to a more balanced society, where work and family are more naturally integrated, difficult. But, by looking at the changes over the last 30 years we can clearly observe that development is possible.

What's Next?

EEoC partners are currently adapting, translating and pilot testing the EEoC Diversity Audit and Employee Health and Well Being Questionnaire in their respective partner country. The results of this activity will be published in September 2011.

JOIN US



"EEoC European Employer of Choice" Facebook group!



Follow us on Twitter @euroeoc!