

## **EMEA DIVERSITY NEWS 49**

### **EDITORIAL**

by Michael Stuber, Owner Manager



## **THE INCLUSION MIRACLE**

Diversity would be nothing without Inclusion. This has been, for some reason, the conviction of D&I practitioners for the past five years. Before that, Diversity, valuing diversity, managing diversity, leveraging diversity were some of the paradigms illustrating different elements needed to create impactful and value-adding frameworks. So, what is the big forward leap of Inclusion and would it be good or appropriate to concentrate on that piece for the next strategy cycle?

If we first look at the nature of Inclusion, the concept clearly looks more at the ‘how’ of Diversity Management – in addition to the ‘what’ of diversity. Insofar, Inclusion refers to both communication and collaboration – all of which are interactive and observable. Accordingly, companies are aiming for inclusive environments that are characterised by inclusive language and inclusive behaviour, both individually and then collectively. In order to support this, the culture and the processes of an organisation need to be designed and implemented in inclusive ways as well – here comes a systemic element. With this, we have our typical D&I agenda in front of us: Changing systems that are – unintendedly – biased for historic and other reasons. And we might be inclined to say that a focus on Inclusion is adequate and promising.

But do we know what leads to inclusive behaviour? Are we aware of the bridge between Diversity and Inclusion? Our didactic model of the Propelling Potential Principle shows that – according to the cognitive process – an open mind-set is required to link a rational starting point (the existence of differences) with the practical behaviours of Inclusion. Not only has this model been exceptionally successful in creating buy-in from (mostly male) managers, it has now been – once again – been confirmed by an academic meta analysis. That study shows that open-mindedness is the critical factor required to create added value from differences. This also confirms that the strong focus on removing different forms of bias is effective and needed. A sole focus on Inclusion does not make sense. What is needed in order to drive this approach successfully forward is a consistent separation, explanation and communication of diversity (differences), open-mindedness (attitudes/bias), inclusion (behaviours) and value-added (outcome/reward) – as opposed to, e.g., putting ‘openness’ in the inclusion bucket.

This edition of EMEA DiversityNews once again talks about all of the above: diversity, open-mindedness, inclusion and added value. Enjoy reading! Yours

*Michael Stuber*

# EMEA DIVERSITY NEWS 49

## GENERAL EDITION

Summer 2013  
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## DIVERSITY DIMENSIONS

### Sweden: Time for the government to address ethnic minority issues

For years, Sweden was considered to be a role model of a social state from a Diversity perspective. The government not only provided immense aids for families or young people, it also had a reputation for a very welcoming immigration policy. However, this 'Nordic model', which also included low unemployment, progressive politics, a social safety net and pro-diversity attitudes appears to totter. Increasing vandalism over the past weeks, which is a reaction on perceived injustice, is an alarming sign for growing inequality in Sweden's society, raising questions over the country's policies in related areas of immigration, unemployment and social equality.

The ongoing riots in Stockholm are a fierce wake-up call for Swedish authorities. For a long time, they have turned their backs on the dire social and economic situation of migrants and minority communities who are facing increasing social marginalisation, scarcer access to decent housing as well as high unemployment rates. According to the OECD, Sweden is the country where inequality is growing much faster than in any other developed nation. The richest fifth of the population owns three-quarters of the country's assets, whereas 46 percent of non-European immigrants to Sweden are unemployed. This social gap drives segregation which is particularly affecting the immigrant parts of society.

But maybe the very situation, in which the Scandinavian country is facing such immense social issues, should not be considered a real surprise. Sweden has had an exceptionally high level of immigration, with about 200 nationalities represented among its 9.6 million people. About 1.8 million of those are first- or second-generation immigrants. So in 2010, almost 20 percent of the residents have had their roots outside Sweden. Knowing that this is quite a recent phenomenon, it makes sense that the situation has evolved into a ticking time bomb, depending on how society and public authorities deal with the new, pronounced societal diversity. But what can the Swedish government do to avoid future riots and to improve the quality of life and the standard of living for disadvantaged residents?

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) has condemned both violence on the street by rioters and the ongoing institutional violence against migrants of successive Swedish governments, which have chosen not to address the deep-rooted causes of exclusion plaguing Swedish society. For instance, the Swedish police project 'REVA', originally aimed to crack down on irregular immigrants, has led to racial profiling in checking IDs and residency permits of anyone 'foreign-looking'. Such practices are clearly discriminatory and undermine the rights of individuals. They also contribute to the exclusion and demonisation of particular communities. ENAR calls on the Swedish government to put measures and resources in place to remedy existing discrimination, high unemployment rates and segregation faced by ethnic minority communities as well as engaging in a dialogue with grassroots NGOs to develop an action programme to decrease tensions in communities and rapidly improve their socio-economic conditions. Those and different approaches

will be necessary to stabilize the situation in Stockholm's neighbourhoods. However, long-term solutions still need to be found in order not only to avoid future riots and ban social inequality, but also to re-install Sweden's image of a leading country in diversity, equality and social affairs. Let's hope that Sweden will exchange good practices with France, Germany, Holland or Belgium, where social inequalities relating to migrational background have been an issue for many years as well.

## **Female and male leaders: What drives them and what makes them successful?**

Several studies by the headhunting giant Korn/Ferry looked into success factors and strengths of senior executive men and women. One finding may almost sound as an insult, when they say that women 'are as qualified as men to lead an organization in top executive roles'. Their reports make up for this by showing how women outperform their male counterparts in more leadership skills than men outperform women. The studies, however, also confirm some of the sad anecdotal information that Diversity practitioners have come across frequently.

What makes a successful top manager and what motivates people to go for a leadership position? Korn/Ferry asked some 20,000 managers (15K men, 5K women) to rank their most important motivators to be an engaged leader and they found that both gender groups are driven by several of the same stimuli. More than 35% of male and female interviewees valued factors like stimulating, challenging work, influence on the organisation's direction, personal accomplishment and work/life balance. In comparison, monetary compensation, expert status and a stable job were not ranked highly by either women or men. The few differences between the genders were interesting: Men valued a broader scope of responsibility, influence and performance more often whereas women rather emphasized personal accomplishment or a friendly workplace. It must be noted that the motivators for men are generally known as characteristics of higher positions, whereas the motivators for women can also be found in many levels of an organisation!

Another study used the Korn/Ferry Decision Styles tool, an online assessment which included about 3,600 men and 820 women capturing their leadership and thinking styles through self-reported responses. The findings were compared with success characteristics of C-level leaders, including integrative, socially attuned, comfortable with ambiguity and confident. Findings show that, with the exception of confidence, female executives generally scored higher than their male colleagues in all these dimensions! But gender differences are subtle and play out mostly in social situations. The differences that exist, however, emerge early in a career and usually persist over the whole time of employment. In this light, the few significant gender differences are quite interesting to point out: In leadership style, men are more task-oriented than women, while both genders are similar in social, intellectual and participative leadership aspects. In thinking styles, female executives had higher scores in creative thinking than men and both were similar in action-focused, flexible and complex thinking. Finally, in emotional styles, women score higher on ambiguity tolerance, empathy and energy, which can be understood as mental tenacity. The report concludes that 'female

executives are more aligned than male executives with the best-in-class profile for C-level leaders'. "The findings confirm that companies have overlooked top talent for many years, while they promoted mediocre candidates", Diversity expert Michael Stuber comments. And he agrees that other factors have often influenced – or biased – the promotion decisions.

Experience, in terms of achieved business growth, operational excellence, high visibility, self-development and mastering challenging / difficult situations, has been identified to be most helpful in getting a manager to higher level leadership positions. Korn/Ferry's analysis of 5,600 men and 1,500 women found that female executives were on par with their male peers on self-development and challenging / difficult experiences, but they lagged them in business growth and high-visibility experience, both of which were identified to be most helpful for career advancement. For visibility, the gender gap widened with each leadership level until female senior executives only reported as much high-visibility experience as their male colleagues one level below!

Finally, Korn/Ferry obtained additional data through the VOICES online surveys including 4,460 men and 1,900 women across all levels. The findings prove that not only women hold themselves to high standards; also others (including men) hold females to higher standards than they do with males. This result confirms the perception of many women who speak about an uphill battle they are fighting in a corporate environment. In addition, it illustrates that perfectionism is likely to be one of the self-inflicted barriers for women when they are aiming for challenges and advancement. This female ambition, in turn, may also fuel the high expectations others have when they observe women in non-stereotypical roles.

Although emerging from a variety of data sources, the various results presented by Korn/Ferry provide additional evidence for some of the key questions related to women's advancement to senior positions. Less so regarding barriers, for which ample research has been consolidated in holistic models, but more related to success factors and how these vary for men and women respectively. What drives and characterises female or male leaders, and what do they bring to the party in terms of experience and skills: These are the key aspects companies need to take into account if they want to consistently develop future leaders that are best able to cope with challenges lying ahead.

## ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGIES

### Swiss Boards are finally becoming international – German boards aren't

What do the management boards of the largest Swiss corporations look like – with regard to internationality and gender? Since 2006, this question is answered by the annual Schilling Report which evaluates the composition of executive boards and so-called administrative boards (supervisory boards) of the country's blue chip firms and other large organisations. A similar study was carried out for Germany in collaboration with European Diversity Research & Consulting.

The trend for the largest Swiss companies is clear: While the percentage of women on boards only increased by 2 percentage points – from 4% in 2006 to 6% in 2013. The percentage of international board members rose dramatically over the same period of time – from 35% in 2006, the percentage increased to 45% in 2013; however, the figure had stagnated from 2006 to 2011.

The study included 119 organisations with the largest numbers of employees, employing an overall number of 860 board members and 820 administrative board members (from 89 of those companies). The 20 Blue Chip enterprises of SMI (Swiss Market Index) were evaluated as a separate group. This elite group of firms employs 68% international executives among their board members, which is significantly higher the average of the entire sample (45%). And looking at the SMI CEOs, the figure is even higher: three out of four CEOs have an international background (70% in 2012). In the overall sample, the share of international CEOs is 42%, and hence much lower than in the SMI and still slightly lower than the average internationality of the boards. However, all those ‘are quite high numbers,’ adds diversity expert Michael Stuber who has regularly commented on board assignments at large multinational firms.

There are also two groups at each end of the continuum: In 15 of the reviewed companies (13% of the sample), there are no Swiss managers working on the boards, whereas the boards of 19 out of the 119 reviewed firms (16%) have exclusively hired Swiss top managers.

On the supervisory / administrative boards, the percentage of international members is 36%, and thus slightly below the percentage of members on the executive boards (45%). In comparison to the previous year, the number rose by two percentage points.

Among the presidents of the administrative boards, there is a portion of 24% which have an international background – this number is much lower than the corresponding figure for CEOs (42%). For the SMI companies, the percentage of international administrative board presidents is 60%, which is again lower than the international share of SMI CEOs (75%).

But all those numbers are stunning when compared with the proportion of women among the administrative board members, which is at 12% and among the administrative board presidents at shameful 1%.

The findings mirror the increasingly global business of the organisations, especially in the SMI, where all the firms are multinational enterprises. In the light of globalisation, demographic changes and tapping of new markets, the increasing diversity on boards seems to be a consistent trend and a result of a strategic talent development. Only at second glance it becomes apparent that there is an underrepresentation of strategically important nationalities, e.g. from emerging economies such as Russia or countries in Asia. Both, on SMI management and supervisory boards, more than half of the international members have an Anglo-Saxon background. Whereas in the management committee of the 119 organizations, Germans form the biggest group of internationals with a percentage of 40 points.



Ironically, Swiss firms are well ahead their German competitors of the DAX30 in terms of internationality. In German blue chip corporations, more than 70% of the board members are from Germany, followed by the US nationals (7%) and Austrians (4%). The latter is an indicator for a strong preference for close neighbours, speaking the same language. Maybe this is a positive sign for women who also often speak the same language – well, more or less.

## Really real: Talent shortages are no longer just a future threat – how D&I can help

Talent shortages are having a high impact on a company's ability to meet their clients' needs. One out of five employers in the EMEA region that are in need of additional talent agree with this statement. This is one of the eye-opening results from the 2013 Talent Shortage Survey conducted by the Manpower Group. Especially in Asia but also in the EMEA region, organisations are having enormous difficulties to find enough of the rightly skilled talents now – while everybody thought this was only going to happen 'some time in the future'.

In 2013, it is still obvious that the recovery from the global recession is happening at a steady but frustratingly slow pace. In many economies, unemployment remains at quite a high level while the creation of new jobs seems to stagnate. This economic environment confronts employers with high uncertainty and they hence seek cost-effective or flexible employment models in order to stay competitive. Despite their reluctance to create FTEs, 26% of all the companies surveyed are struggling to fill such vacancies due to the lack of qualified talents. In the EMEA region 20,000 employers from 24 different countries were interviewed, and many reported the same challenge: Difficulties filling jobs due to a lack of available talents. Hard-to-fill vacancies have become more of an issue in several EMEA labour markets, compared with the results from 2012. Even growth countries like Turkey or Romania report high increases in talent shortage, with 17 percentage points and 9 percentage points respectively.

But then, good talent has always been hard to find – so what is it that makes talent shortage such a pronounced and prospectively growing issue in some EMEA countries? A shortage of candidates with the specific technical competencies and a general lack of applicants are both key phenomena in EMEA – and both have become more prevalent over time. When hiring managers were asked to provide further insight to the question, 36% of them said that the shortcomings of technical competencies were the main issue, followed by 33% referring to a lack of available applicants. 19% answered that they find it hard to attract candidates with the right professional qualifications.

“The findings show clearly that employers have to utilise Diversity Management to address their challenges”, recommends Diversity expert Michael Stuber. They first need to verify their search profiles and identify and remove the biases that might be embedded in the description of the desired candidates. “Subtle or manifest male connotations are most common”, the expert says. Then they need to increase their search radius as well as improve their evaluation and assessment methods in order not to deselect good talent that simply looks or appears different from the expected

mainstream candidate. Finally, employers have to ensure that they not only have attractive job offers to make but that the overall package will be attractive, including work culture, work/life integration, international and inter-generational collaboration, and of course interesting perspectives. Together, these approaches will address all of the challenges identified by the current Manpower survey.

## **POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

### **Iraq & Somalia: Improving freedom of ethnic and religious minorities through conflict-prevention programmes**

When the Human Rights Watch published their World Report 2013 drawing on events from the end of 2011 through November 2012, they detected great injustice and violent procedures, that were still undermining people's rights. Improving fundamental rights and living conditions of ethnic and religious minorities is still an issue, for instance in Somalia or Iraq – and it gets addressed.

Even though one could call the progress sporadic and uneven, Somalia and Iraq seem to try to improve their policies in dealing with ethnic and religious minorities by implementing so-called conflict prevention programmes. Those programs aim at securing protection, promoting fundamental freedom of minority groups and strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations so that they can report and lobby on violations of minority rights.

The programmes are conducted by the Minority Rights Groups, which is a non-governmental organisation, and local partners in the respective countries. They try to fight against human right abuses and denials of the people's fundamental freedom for instance by organising capacity-building workshops for women and small minorities. More than 200 workshops were held in Iraq alone. The efforts lead to first results when the Basra Provincial Council Committee for Religious Minorities in Iraq called upon the central government to provide support for Iraqi Christians wanting to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Reportedly, it took multiple steps to protect members of minority religious groups and address their concerns, providing humanitarian assistance to internally displaced minority groups, including Christians. This can be considered stunning news as the country used to be rather known for discrimination of non-Muslims who reported systematic disadvantages, especially regarding employment opportunities as well as frequent hostilities of sectarian violence. Now, unheard activities are reported aiming at an integration of religious groups. There are, however, still significant drawbacks. The human rights conditions still remain poor for activists, women, girls and particularly for Iraqis with disabilities who are mostly excluded from education or employment as well as for religious minorities which have been in difficult positions for many years. Also in Somalia, people still feel the long history of discrimination, which escalated into patterns of human right violations.



In both countries, the efforts must be seen as promising steps in the right direction. Recent reports said that the situation in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, had already somewhat improved, with less open armed conflicts. In Iraq, the government has agreed upon the fact that the right for religious freedom is inherent in every human being. There are, however, still countless steps to be made towards a better life for the Iraqi and Somali population.

## **French government pushes for progress in Gender Equality for its 5 million public employees**

Despite some reservations, French trade unions have signed a new agreement on equality between men and women in the public services in France. This is the concrete outcome of cornerstones, which were discussed during a major conference with all key stakeholders in July 2012. The new framework agreement is a breakthrough for 5 million employees in France and an unrivalled initiative in the EMEA region. The country has already made significant progress on the numbers of women in management in recent years and now strengthens its position in gender equality in the Public sphere.

The signing of the joint agreement of the French government and corresponding trade unions is a robust foundation for the whole public sector in France to embark on 15 newly adopted initiatives that combat existing gender stereotypes and foster gender equality in a consistent way. The totality of the programme will reach out to an amazing 5 million officials working for the government, local authorities and hospitals.

The official announcement particularly highlighted three initiatives: a strive for more balanced representation of both men and women in the bodies of social dialogue, a reduction of the gender pay gap, the verification of the non-discriminatory nature of recruitment processes as well as a in-depth reflection of the reasons why women have not been promoted to higher levels as frequently as their male colleagues. Another key point of the framework agreement is an advanced right for parental leave for all employees. In order to enhance the balance of work and private life, work time accounts shall be introduced. In addition, an annual report on gender equality including an action plan going forward has been made a mandatory part of the agreement. The framework agreement also includes an element to combat sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace.

“This agreement is a result of a long process of social dialogue”, says Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault when announcing the new framework. However, there was still some concern expressed over a potential lack of concrete and binding action plans or budgeted resources for the initiatives proposed. Regardless, the comprehensiveness and scope of the framework agreement makes it a landmark in the European landscape of Public employers.

## BUSINESS CASE

### Young talent wants to live and work individually: Continental graduate Diversity surveys in Germany and Romania

Young people do not want quotas but a good Work-Life balance and an individual life design. Those are the key findings of Continental's 10<sup>th</sup> representative 'Continental Student Survey', conducted in Germany with about 1,000 students.

In 2013, one focus area of Continental's student survey was the topic of diversity, and more specifically the aspects of equal opportunities (for both genders), work-life balance (for all) and career perspectives. For several years, the survey has been looking into the fundamental question of 'What do young people feel is important for their future career life?'. For most of the interviewed students (90%) enjoying their job was one key factors in this respect. Only slightly less people (86%) said that having a good balance between their professional and private lives would be essential for being satisfied with a job. "Since years, work/life integration has remained among the top 3 preferences of young talent", comments Diversity expert Michael Stuber. And also Elke Strathmann, Chief Human Resource Manager at Continental, agrees "Bringing career success and private life in a healthy balance is always a sign of intelligent and flexible working." And indeed, 57% of the students said they would back off their career goals for their family. On the other hand, 82% want to perform well at work, whereas only 21% were willing to work more than 40 hours per week, a result which is consistent with the desire for regulated working hours, which has doubled since 2004.

And what about equal opportunities? Do students perceive any differences or preferences between the genders? The Continental survey found that two-thirds (65%) of the interviewees believe that women are disadvantaged in their career compared to men, while only 28% think that males and females were 'equal'. And an even smaller number of students (26%) supports the idea of a quota for women in management.

For Romanian university graduates, the basic question is about their future prospects. While almost three quarters of students (74%) saw their career opportunities positively in 2005, only slightly more than half (55%) did so in 2011. The number of graduates with more pessimistic outlooks remained virtually unchanged at a low level.

The current edition is the latest piece of research of an annual series that started in 2004 with an initial focus on young people's perspectives on working time, career and qualification. Already in 2005, the global automotive company added Romania as an additional source for their survey, where they conduct their study every two years. "Continental needs young top-notch talents," explains Heinz-Gerhard Wente, member of the Executive Board of Continental, the need for the frequently conducted surveys. Therefore, the findings are particularly important for the tire manufacturer in order to be aware of what drives and attracts young, ambitious students. Chief Human Resource Manger Strathmann knows "The challenge for the future lies in giving well-qualified young people enough room in the working environment to live their lives individually".

Continental's approach of interviewing potential future employees to later be able to meet their needs and preferences in terms of job expectations are therefore a great way to face the issue of labour shortage and pro-actively position the company as an employer of choice early on.

## **To add or not to add value: How and why scientific research delivers different answers on the business case**

The basic question IF Diversity CAN add value in a business organisation has been investigated by many scientific studies. Due to the nature of academic approaches, each study had to focus on selected aspects and found – depending on the chosen approach – different answers. More recent research tried to identify circumstances under which positive effects of diversity can be observed. Other projects tested possible negative effects created by differences, such as conflict or misunderstanding. Two current academic contributions reach seemingly conflicting conclusions.

Researchers from Aarhus University and University of Lausanne analysed how workforce diversity can be linked to the productivity of a sample of companies in Denmark. For their investigation, they used a matched employer-employee data-set, looking at two fundamental mechanisms which had already been identified by earlier research: On the one hand possible negative effects of diversity due to poor communication, lower social ties and trust, as well as poor collaboration among workers. On the other hand positive impacts of diversity on decision-making processes, problem-solving, (higher) creativity and (better) information about global product markets. The research project aimed at finding out which of the two would outweigh the other. They focused on three dimensions of diversity: cultural background, education and demographic characteristics, and used the Herfindahl index for their analysis. Their main findings were that education diversity can be significantly and positively associated with firm productivity. Conversely, diversity in demographics or ethnicity is either not associated or negatively correlated with firm productivity. The authors, however, did not look at other influencing factors that may have been present or absent and hence leave readers wondering, why other studies found more positive correlations.

A Frankfurt-based research team of Professor van Dick looked at a different set of data to identify critical elements that would turn diversity into a positive feature. For their research they conducted a field study with 316 university students with diverse backgrounds and asked them to work in groups on certain projects. Interestingly, the students who had a positive attitude towards diversity could better identify with other group members, which led to a higher performance of the team. For students with no or a rather negative attitude towards differences, no correlation was found. Van Dick and his colleagues conducted further studies with similar hypotheses, whereas the vast majority of their analysis showed that the paramount aspect is a positive attitude towards difference(s). Even more, the study found that positive effects can even occur, when open-mindedness is there, but diversity is not.

The overall message from these studies is relatively clear and consistent with previous findings: A large-scale meta-analysis of almost 100 studies all of which compared the success of homogeneous vs. heterogeneous teams found that all those studies that saw a positive edge for heterogeneous teams included a piece of diversity awareness or skill-building for the diverse team, whereas homogeneous teams performed better if their mixed competitors were left with no briefing. This key learning corresponds with van Dick's findings: Diversity needs a conscious element of awareness or fostering of openness in order to become a competitive advantage. As described in the Editorial of this edition, the Propelling Potential Principle models the required elements. If the elements of open-mindedness and inclusion are ignored, positive or negative effects may occur as the Danish-Swiss study shows.

## MEDIA & BITS

### Number of over-65s in work tops one Million

The work force is aging as baby boomers move toward retirement. By now, one in ten over-65 year olds are still wage-earners. This question has recently been revisited by the Office of National Statistics in the UK (ONS). When they released a report showing that the number of employees older than 65 have reached far more than 1 million, that figure made the ghost of demographic shifts a spooky reality.

Compared to the 753 thousand, which made up for 7.6% of the population in employment in 1993, figures nowadays have risen drastically. Mighty 12% of the population in employment are over 65 years of age these days, which equals 1.4 million elderly employees in the UK. The ONS said that this increase is partly caused by the fact that more people stay longer in employment but also due to higher numbers of people in that age group within the whole population. Both, the number of people in work and the employment rate for over 65s is the highest since records began. But from February to April 2013, the employment rate of over 65s was only at 9.5%!

Experts say that those figures on the one hand reflect the willingness of people to recruit and retain older workers, which is a positive sign especially with regards to diversity, but on the other hand they also show that employees need to stay longer in employment, not for the enjoyment of work, but rather for topping up inadequate pensions. While those news certainly raise concerns, their effect on the younger generation, who is seeking jobs, is somehow unclear. According to the ONS it is 'however not problematic for the 16 to 24-year-olds. Findings show that youth unemployment rather fell by 43,000 to 950,000 lately.' Previous statistics actually proved that countries with high employment rates of older employees at the same time show low overall unemployment rates. "The cake gets bigger", as Diversity expert Michael Stuber explains this seemingly contradictory result, and adds "and jobs for experienced employee are typically very different from jobs for newbies".

## Arab trade union organisation includes Diversity in their set of priorities

The Arab national trade union organisations associated with the ITUC, the so-called global voice of workers worldwide, have decided to launch the process of creating a trade union organisation for the Arab region, using the framework of the ITUC to promote and defend the rights of workers. The purpose of this initiative is to respond effectively to the political and social aspirations expressed by the revolutions which took place in the Arab region. To this end, the founding organisations of this ‘democratic and independent Arab trade union movement’ have adopted a charter which sets out the fundamental principles for action and defines the objectives to be pursued.

The struggle for freedom, social justice and equality, the fight against oppression, exploitation, poverty and discrimination are at the heart of the new Arab trade union movement. Based on the rejection of all forms of colonialism, racism, sectarianism and terrorism, the Democratic and Independent Arab trade union movement seeks to unify all its force to fight for trade union rights, for the establishment of genuine social dialogue in the Arab countries, for the creation of decent jobs, in particular for young people, as well as for the defence of the rights of migrant workers and those in the informal economy. The struggle for women's rights, which are particularly repressed in the Arab region, and for a more equitable participation of women within trade unions is equally a fundamental priority on the agenda of the democratic and independent Arab trade union movement.

And this is already having first effects. More and more Arab women are finding ways to organise for a better future through trade union solidarity across borders. This year in March, about 33 women trade unionists from across the Middle East and North Africa participated in a regional women’s leadership conference which took place in Tunisia. They shared experiences and brainstormed on ways to advance women’s equality in their workplaces and respective countries. Those meetings do not only improve the women’s self-confidence, they also make them even more aware of the fact that they are also part of the revolutions and that they have great potential and capacity that will bring them further in the fight for their rights.

## NEWS ABOUT US

### Contributing to “Disability Matters Europe” in Paris

The this year’s European conference ‘Disability matters’ took place on 13 June 2013 in Paris and featured executive presenters from the innovative league of best practice corporations committed to Diversity, including different abilities. Awards for leading initiatives went to Renault, IBM, SFR, Sodexo and Dell, which all were honoured for their programmes valuing employees or customers with a disability. Michael Stuber, owner manager of European Diversity Research & Consulting, moderated the workplace panel presenting the award winners DELL, for their outstanding global employee network ‘True Ability’, and RENAULT for their comprehensive communication platform including social media tools for Diversity & Disability.

All in all, it was a great meeting of experts from the practice arena who could share their knowledge and experience. We are hence looking forward to the more ‘Disability Matters’ events, produced by Springboard Consulting, in various locations.

**Your opinion counts – your input is valued**

**[Please Read and Repond]**

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Thank you very much!

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