

EMEA DIVERSITY NEWS 37

PUBLIC EDITION

Fall 2010
Editorial

Dear Readers,

It is currently the holy month of Ramadan, one of the most sacred Islamic observances for millions of Muslims around the world. As able-bodied Muslims are fasting, Europe is experiencing a swelling of political controversy on female Islamic articles of dress. The burqa and the niqab are the center of the discussion as unease towards the Muslim religious group is growing in Europe.

France has particularly propelled this topic through a 335 to 1 vote by the lower house of parliament in mid-July 2010 in favour of prohibiting the concealment of the face in public places. Belgian MPs had agreed through a gradual process that the hijab (head-cover or “headscarf”) should be condemned as a form of oppression of women and Belgium’s lower house of parliament voted in 2010 for a bill to prohibit clothes that do not allow the wearer to be identified (including the burqa and niqab). Spain, Britain and Italy also have their own public campaigns, legal proposals and social sentiments on the issue.

When referring back to the Quran, the text does not – from our understanding – prescribe any of these specific coverings. Rather, Muslim women are urged to dress “modestly”. Many Muslims around the world would agree in broad terms that the hijab is recommended, though not compulsory. Unfortunately, there is rampant unease with an article of clothing as simple as a cloth draped over one’s head out of religious respect. There have been reports of many cases of women forced to take off their headscarves in order to be able to take up jobs. In addition, many educated and articulate Muslim women of foreign origin have complained of being treated with disrespect and as intellectually inferior not by their husbands, but by European nationals.

In this month’s Public edition, explore the French decision to ban burqas, Bayer Healthcare’s development of global Diversity and how Europe is trying out anonymous applications to reduce discrimination in recruitment. Also, explore the changing numbers of workforce mobility, the financial impact of the lack of language skills, and much more.

Enjoy reading and until time,

Perry Hwang & Michael Stuber

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DIVERSITY DIMENSIONS

Belgian Database of Female Entrepreneurs

In Belgium, although there is conducive business environment, only 2.91% of women have started their own businesses, much less than in other countries of higher income where the average is 7.91%. Only one in three entrepreneurs are women who work mainly in areas of human services and business sectors, while women represent nearly half of the workforce in other professions. Nearly half (44%) of young Belgian children believe that self-employment is not a socially-accepted career choice for women.

The Belgian Institute for Equality of Women and Men has entrusted JUMP with the mission of making an inventory of female entrepreneurship in Belgium to better understand their expectations. When female entrepreneurs were asked what kinds of initiatives should be developed to support women's entrepreneurship, responses primarily concerned the balance of family and work life. 80% of female entrepreneurs are interested in maternity leave rights equal to the employed, more flexible systems of childcare, a system of entrepreneur substitution in case of illness, and also more visibility through a network of ambassadors, a web portal or large-scale events. As of now, many of the 45,000 women surveyed also stated that they rely on their personalities, training and professional networks.

Anonymous Applications in Europe

Many European countries have launched anonymous application trial programmes over the recent years. The Dutch programme, tested in Nijmegen in 2008, was a subject of national discussion and compared anonymous CVs and application letters with ones detailing name and ethnic background. Belgium's federal government has hired people via anonymous applications for about 6 years but the results have not yet been analysed. France is awaiting the results of a trial involving a number of government authorities and companies. In addition, Sweden, Great Britain and Switzerland have also debated and researched anonymous job applications, but have not introduced legislation to make it compulsory.

Following suit with these efforts, top companies operating in Germany are to begin testing anonymous applications that remove any reference to ethnic background or other personal information irrelevant to job performance. Later this year, five groups including Procter & Gamble and L'Oreal will ask applicants to provide only their qualifications in job applications. "Anonymous applications help all recruitment and HR managers focus on the specifics and necessities of a position and objectively select the most qualified candidate regardless of migrational background or personal details," said Diversity expert Michael Stuber. "Through this programme, interviewers and assessment centre personnel will have many 'Aha!'-moments as the future will bring a significantly

increased amount of diverse candidates through their doors.” In the current situation in Germany, job candidates of Turkish origin have a 14-percent slimmer chance of being invited to an interview. Not only immigrants but also people with disabilities and mothers of small children can benefit from the trial programme.

ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGIES

Bayer HealthCare’s Global Diversity Summit

“Driving innovation using the power of diversity” was the motto for the two-day Bayer HealthCare Global Diversity Summit in June 2010. European Diversity Research & Consulting helped to design, plan and roll-out the fully interactive event which brought together around 90 managers from around the world to discuss the importance of concrete Diversity programmes. During the conference, the participants worked together to develop effective approaches for future implementation in a creative environment. The managers not only underlined the power of diversity as a key driver for innovation but also addressed stereotypes and “unconscious biases” as important concepts in the area of Diversity & Inclusion. The Diversity Summit was implemented as a kick-off event to create a BHC framework around the already existing local Diversity initiatives and to create some function-specific action plans to further promote Diversity & Inclusion as part of the organisational culture.

Establishment of New UN Body on Gender Equality

In a historic move, the United Nations General Assembly voted unanimously to create a new entity to accelerate progress in meeting the needs of women and girls worldwide. The establishment of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women — to be known as UN Women — is a result of years of negotiations between UN Member States and advocacy by the global women’s movement. “I am grateful to Member States for having taken this major step forward for the world’s women and girls,” said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a statement welcoming the decision. “UN Women will significantly boost UN efforts to promote gender equality, expand opportunity, and tackle discrimination around the globe.”

UN Women merges and will build on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system which focus exclusively on gender equality and women’s empowerment: the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW, established in 1946), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW, established in 1976), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI, established in 1997) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, established in 1976). UN Women — which will be operational by January 2011 — will be a dynamic and strong champion for women and girls, providing them with a powerful voice at the global, regional and local levels.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

France Bans Items of Clothing Which Cover the Face

In July, France's National Assembly overwhelmingly passed a bill banning any garment which covers of the face in public areas. The crushing vote of 335 to 1 brings France closer to becoming the first democracy to ban women in the street from wearing the niqab or burka, which are often regarded as symbols of religious extremism. The bill has now been passed onto the Senate where it is likely to achieve similar voting numbers. The passing of this bill in the National Assembly visibly represents the political consensus in France against the full veil even though only 2,000 women out of a Muslim population of some 5 million are thought to wear it. Through the passing of this bill, wearing an item of clothing which hides the face in open spaces, including streets, shops, parks or cafés as well as in public services such as town halls, schools and hospitals would be prohibited. Offenders would face a fine of €150 and forcing someone to cover their face would be punishable by a one-year prison sentence and a €30,000 fine.

UK Abolishment of Retirement Age

The UK government announced on 29 July 2010 that it plans to scrap the default retirement age of 65 from October 2011. This means that in the future, employers cannot dismiss staff because they have reached the age of 65. The Employers Forum on Age (EFA) has described the new proposal as a "victory" against ageism. The law as it stands means that an employer can force an employee to retire at the age of 65 without paying any financial compensation. The only obligation for employers is to meet with the employee to discuss their retirement at least six months before their 65th birthday. At the meeting, it is entirely at the employer's discretion as to whether or not the employee must retire. A consultation process about scrapping the rule has begun and the dates state that the changes could begin as early as 6 April 2011. This move is being criticised by many employers who believe that it will hamper the efforts of businesses to weather the recession and risk causing rifts among staff. However, there are advantages in abolishing a compulsory retirement age. Retaining mature employees allows organisations to retain their history of leadership skills. Particularly in the current economic situation, seasoned experience and historical understanding can be very advantageous for organisations.

The European Commission is proposing that retirement lengths in countries across the 27-nation bloc should rise automatically in line with rising life expectancy. Where currently there are four people of working age for every one over 65, this number will be cut in half by 2060, making state pensions harder and harder to afford, a commission paper noted.

BUSINESS CASE

The Financial Impact of Foreign Language Skills

In a new study commissioned by the European Commission, the use of language skills by SMEs and the impact on business performance was analysed with surprising results. The survey of SMEs, 'ELAN: Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise', found that a significant amount of business is being lost as a result of lack of language skills. Across the sample of nearly 2,000 businesses, 11% of respondents (195 SMEs) had lost a contract as a result of lack of language skills. Many were unable or unwilling to indicate the size of the contract lost, but 37 businesses had lost actual contracts which together were valued at between €8 million and €13.5 million. A further 54 businesses had lost potential contracts worth in total between €16.5 million and €25.3 million. At least 10 businesses had lost contracts worth over €1 million. "Language is an obvious key factor of international business success, not only to open up markets and business opportunities abroad," says European Diversity Research & Consulting's General Manager Michael Stuber. "It also broadens people's minds for other approaches and hence encourages learning and improvement in one's own sphere", he adds. And language skills needs will increase in future: In 13 of the 29 countries surveyed, at least 50% of respondents believed they would need additional language skills in the next three years. Intercultural skills were also widely predicted to be required in future, although not at the same level of response.

Perspectives on Job Mobility in Europe

The European Commission has released a report setting out in a consolidated way the rights of Europeans to live and work in another EU country. The report also provides an update on legal developments in the past decade. Currently, 2.3% of people in the EU reside in a Member State other than their own. However, a new Eurobarometer survey also presented today finds that 17% of Europeans envisage working abroad in the future and 48% would consider looking for work in another country or region if they were to lose their job. The survey sheds light on Europeans' attitudes to worker mobility and found that:

- 10% of Europeans say they have lived abroad for work either within or outside the EU at some point in their lives, while 13% have done so for education and training. 41% know a friend or relative who has either worked or studied abroad.
- 17% of Europeans envisage working abroad in the future, ranging from 51% in Denmark to just 4% in Italy. 34% of Europeans rate the chances of finding a job abroad better than at home.
- Unemployment is a powerful reason to move: 48% of Europeans would consider moving regions or countries for work if they lost their job.

As part of its new ten-year strategy: Europe 2020, the Commission will work on facilitating and promoting intra-EU mobility. In particular, the flagship initiative ‘An agenda for new skills and jobs’, due to be adopted by the Commission in the second half of 2010, aims to increase labour participation and better match labour supply and demand, including through labour mobility.

MEDIA & BITS

European eLearning Tools

HALDE is now offering an Anti-discrimination eLearning tool (in French) for the general public and employers. The employer eLearning tool focuses on those highly involved in the success of Diversity work in an organisation, such as HR employees or leaders who are in key positions on antidiscrimination work. The tool discusses three benefits from diversity: Enrichment of experience/knowledge, creativity, and better response to clients. Through a series of ten chapters, the tool leads practitioners through the whole recruitment process through interactive e-learning tasks. Taking the perspective of the avatars “Dominique” (a HR Recruiter) and “Daniel” (her boss), the user accompanies Dominique through the recruitment of a new employee. The tool runs through important factors such as the definition of the job advertisement, writing the job offer, choosing distribution channels, selecting candidates, and more according to gender, ethnic background, and age. With each chapter divided into an exercise and a quiz, the user gets a feedback on whether their solutions are right or wrong along with an explanation according to antidiscrimination legislation.

Our own eLearning tool (in English), ‘eDiversity Europe’, is an e-learning programme that helps to foster a productive work culture for all. The course instils awareness of diversity, challenges stereotypes and offers recommendations for effective personal behaviour through four individual learning modules: Diversity and how it can help build stronger teams, an overview of European legislation with case studies, how Diversity and inclusion can work practically, and recommendations on how to make a difference yourself. Through interactive online participation and understanding through quizzes and examples, key areas of Diversity such as race & ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, age and sexual orientation are addressed. For more information on our eDiversity tool, contact office@european-diversity.com.

NEWS ABOUT US

An Overview of the Development of Diversity in Europe

When we started our business more than 13 years ago, there were almost no concepts or insights existing on the European level. Neither the EMEA subsidiaries of large US multinationals nor the big European players had developed substantial approaches back then. Today's experts are often not aware of the development, and many might be wondering why they should care – now that things are so much more advanced. As often in business – and in Diversity – information needs to be contextualised in order for it to become meaningful, hence valuable.

Our latest information tool is a timeline showing the history of Diversity – and later Inclusion – since we started to operate. It highlights our commitment to innovation which has been exemplified through a comprehensive range of research projects, publications and speaking engagements that also show the changing paradigms, approaches and focus areas for D&I over time. Moreover, a selection of the landmark client projects we completed for leading international organisations provides a picture of the development of Diversity practices. In many cases, we were the first to design and implement a specific tool for and with our innovative clients. As experts in EMEA Diversity Management and Marketing, we have offered in-depth intelligence services, comprehensive communication tools, and ground-breaking learning programs for leading international organisations. The new timeline can provide inspiration for your current Diversity work and an information on the many ways we can add value to your successful work. To receive your copy of the document, contact office@european-diversity.com - we will also mail it out to our key contacts in the coming weeks.

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