

EMEA DIVERSITY NEWS 52 EDITORIAL

by Michael Stuber, Owner Manager



CAN DIVERSITY BE EFFECTIVELY GLOBAL?

Business talks so much about globalisation that we could easily assume that we live and work in a global reality. And in many respects, there is truth in universal aspects of everyday life – and we may or may not like the fact that business hotels, city centre shops and even restaurants or theatre shows can look and feel very similar around the globe. For D&I, international corporations ask themselves how to practically apply the idea of a global framework for Diversity & Inclusion that brings everyone together under one umbrella while accommodating regional and country specifics. Let's face it: Even within one country organisation, there can be quite many conflicting views on and preferences for (or against) diversity. Multiplying this on a global scale can be scary. Hence, many companies kept their global definitions quite general – sometimes not even generic. The downside of this clearly is that a fluffy global definition (e.g. “all the differences and similarities that make us unique”) does achieve what is needed in the first place: Unite people behind a common understanding that relates D&I with corporate realities.

Getting more concrete will sooner or later lead to difficult decisions where a company has to position itself regarding ethnic minorities, religion or sexual orientation, which tend to be the most disputed topics. But even age or gender can be sensitive in some of the world's geographies. Only when a company is clear on those fundamental aspects of people, they can move on to ‘diversity of thought’, ‘variety of skills’ and the many other factors that are of immediate relevance in the workplace. Obviously, personal demographics and deeper (underwater) facets come as an individual package, which is why we all deal with the multiple dependencies complex individuals bring to work. One of the easy inroads in this context is Internationality: welcoming experts from other countries and cultures has been a quick and simple exercise for most businesses, and it felt natural for many – including the learning curve they had to pass. When it comes to local ethnic minorities – who might be from similar cultural backgrounds as the most-wanted international experts – the tone changes from major to minor: Suddenly, many barriers are up in the air and all kinds of discussions take place regarding difficult outreach and integration. Special programmes must be created and initiatives will be under observation. Reflecting on this discrepancy between admiring international experts and struggling with local minorities is one of the D&I exercises that creates real insight. Just like reading this issue of EMEA DiversityNews ... Enjoy!

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DIVERSITY DIMENSIONS

Two sides of the same coin? What British families want and what they get

Flexible working is one of the bestselling employment features companies can offer their employees as an increasing amount of surveys demonstrates. Flexible employers score higher on the labour markets and can more easily attract the right talent. However, the reality still holds a lot of room for improvement, as the new Working Families report “Time, Health and the Family 2014” shows. The results that confirm experts’ views are based on an online-survey of 507 men and 530 women.

The latest Working Families report provides a snapshot view of how parents combine work and private life and examines whether they are achieving the kind of balance they aim at. The results show a gap between demand and supply. Workplace pressure is a concrete challenge for one quarter of respondents, reporting to be stressed. Moreover, nearly half of all parents feel that their working life is becoming increasingly demanding and only 15 percent report lower levels of stress compared with the past. Nevertheless, almost one third of parents report that there is no flexible working offer at their workplace and another third of respondents is unaware of such offers.

Concerning parenting roles, models might shift in nearer future. Nowadays, traditional family roles remain prevalent, but things are likely to change with the younger generation. On the one hand, the model of a full-time male bread-winner and a part-time mother (50% of all households) remains common. In this context, micro-inequities occur quite often; for example when something goes wrong at school or in childcare, mothers are the first to be called. On the other hand, younger fathers are more aware about their work/life balance issues and hence more often flag out insufficient flexibility tools – this may well be an expression of a more active fatherhood identity.

A general evaluation of the situation is, however, impossible as industry and socio-economic differences are evident. While the financial industry and IT-companies are known for offering innovative work formats, the report says that the education, retail and healthcare sectors are most likely not to offer such. Respondents with lower qualification levels, working in manual occupations or having a lower household income were less attracted by flexible working offers than higher educated participants – a result that echoes the British Government’s Work-Life-Balance Survey of 2012. This reinforces the recommendation that each company needs to explore their individual business case taking into account their stakeholders’ preferences.

But still, work/life balance is a biased concept that strongly favours current parents compared to all other employees. This will continue as a bill that should introduce the right to request flexible working to all employees was been delayed for an indefinite period. Currently only employees with children under the age of 17 or carers have the right to request a flexible pattern of work in the UK.

Swedish Government's patience snapped: Gender quota threat

The Swedish government considers forcing corporate boards to appoint more women after finding voluntary programmes failed to bring about greater gender equality. The Swedish Minister of Finance, Anders Borg, announced a one-year-deadline for all companies to modify their recruitment processes. If gender equality will not improve within this period, Sweden will “gradually move towards being forced to launch quota legislation,” he said. It would be the second European country lately taking the step from a non-binding requirement to a quota system following a perceived slow speed of change. The German right-left Coalition has recently included a gender quota for supervisory boards in their coalition agreement.

While Swedish politics and society rate high on many gender equality scores, their companies still seem to be lagging behind; even if they score second compared to other European countries. About 45 percent of Sweden's elected officials are female, compared with only 22 percent of senior managers at the country's 25 biggest companies. But women also make up 24 percent of Sweden's corporate boards, according to an index by Statistics Sweden measuring 231 publicly traded firms. However, they only head five of the 100 biggest Swedish companies as CEO. One of them, Annika Falkengren, Chief Executive of the Swedish bank Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken (SEB) questions the tendency to “glorify Sweden” and instead criticises her country for not doing enough to help women succeed in the corporate sphere. At the same time, Mrs. Falkengren is not enthusiastic about a quota; women should not be asked to do a job because a law demands it.

Intense debate around gender equality has gripped Sweden since the chairman of the Swedish Federation of Enterprise, Jens Spendrup, said in a radio interview that one of the reasons fewer women make it to corporate boards is that there's a lack of competent female candidates. This argument can be easily rejected by looking at the existing equality within government owned companies like Vattenfall, depicting a female share on boards of about 49 percent and 43 percent of board chairpersons being female, according to the government's website. Apparently, there is no lack of female talent in that business environment.

Taking a look abroad seems to foster Swedish impatience: Norway was the first country in the world to impose a gender quota of 40 percent. This has, however, created mixed results, according to various studies: Some find increased professionalism, others find decreased market value. Some talk about increased normality, others about more pronounced gender conflict. A couple of EU countries followed the Norwegian example (France, Finland, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy) trying to break the glass ceiling by law. In 2011 the United Kingdom set a voluntary 25%-target for its 100 biggest companies that now reached an average female share of 19 percent. This is seen to be similar to French or Dutch companies and far better than Belgian or Italian companies. Hence the effectiveness of legally binding quota is once more challenged – in addition to the not resolved question how to deal with non-compliant or underachieving companies. Here, the Norwegian example is certainly out-of-scope for the EU: there, non-complying companies face the danger of compulsory liquidation by the government...

ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGIES

How CEO's talk about gender parity – and how they should

The need for clear leadership, including sense making, direction (and target) setting and role modelling has been found critical for the success of Diversity initiatives in many studies. To date, however, the CEOs' perspectives have not been examined by research: how do they justify the slow pace of change and what drivers for gender equality do they see personally and organisationally? What do CEOs do to support the gender agenda? These and other questions are examined by the current KPMG study conducted by Dr. Elisabeth Kelan, Associate Professor at the Department of Management at King's College, London. Her research team interviewed five female and fifteen male CEOs coming from different industries and continents.

The recent CEO study on Gender parity found explanations for the past lack of progress in three areas: management failure, the role of social expectations and the competition for female talents. CEOs report self-critically that they lack in time, commitment and special Diversity skills to build a corporate culture which encourages female managers to raise to higher management echelons and then remain in the group of corporate leaders. Moreover, CEOs talked about prevailing negative perception of leading women and the general problem to integrate private preferences with the demands of executive life; an issue that is mistakenly discussed in relation to female employees and managers much more often than with their male peers. The report also found that female talents are already seen as a scarce resource for which companies are competing.

The unique survey also found that CEOs genuinely want to take meaningful action and are determined to make a real difference on the Gender issue during their time in office. They put forward three reasons for the importance of gender parity: the business case, societal reasons and personal cases, the latter frequently being underutilised. By positional default, CEOs put a focus on the business case which is now confirmed by more than 130 robust studies, confirming improved decision-making, productivity, organisational adaptability, customer focus and external image. CEOs also see a social responsibility to contribute to the development of traditional gender roles. In addition, many CEOs have come to develop their personal case for gender equality, when for instance their daughters or other female family members are affected by gender-related barriers. Many see this as a powerful base for action, but everybody knows that we can't wait for those cases to occur for all CEOs and all diversity strands.

Kelan's current report summarises six critical leadership behaviours contributing to better gender equality within organisations. First of all, accountability matters, which refers to the personal responsibility of CEOs as well as reasonable chain of command. Many CEOs have already developed personal ownership for the topic and actively searched for change agents or tried to motivate the workforce themselves. Communication and leading by example was also once more identified as a supporting leadership behaviour. The research team found that CEOs tend to pick one or two key strategic initiatives to initiate change and to challenge related critical issues.

Experience with comprehensive change initiatives have already shown that accountability is a good starting point but not enough and focusing on very few areas will fail to create the necessary broad impact on an organisation. And also Elisabeth Kenan resumes that CEOs “appear to hold back from fully utilising these behaviours in driving effective change,” but she supports the focus on one or two aspects, combined with an authentic personal leadership on the topic. Already in the past, practitioners have created specific interventions to help C-suite executives verify the necessary scope of D&I initiatives and identify the personal contribution they will have to develop and deploy. These ‘role modelling’ workshop for top executives have proven to be both adequate and effective for this target group. The related dialogue shall also lead to cascading accountability so that on the next level(s) down, more practical planning of change initiatives can happen.

More than Resource Mines and Salerooms: How to attract BRIC talents

Companies carefully watch the economic developments of the so-called BRIC(S) countries, for the growing middle classes in Brazil, Russia, India and China provide outstanding sales and growth opportunities. Now, large corporations start to involve their HR departments in their BRIC strategies to also look at the well-educated and motivated talent in these countries. A new report by Ernst & Young has surveyed 1,109 professionals in BRIC countries to identify drivers of satisfaction, engagement and retention in each market. The results might well motivate more companies to implement a broader Diversity approach which will also foster a differentiated internal and external employer brand that also taps into the potential of BRIC talent.

The latest Ernst & Young BRIC report highlights the significant potential these countries may provide in closing the talent gap that has been projected since years. At the same time, there are strong recommendations against a one-size-fits-all approach. According to EY, Brazilian talents aim for a high energy and socially oriented culture while Russian employees favour individual career growth and a positive work environment. Indian and Chinese workers rather focus on hard-facts like fast promotions and corresponding salary increases (India) and proves to work for a rapidly growing organisation. Clearly, companies have the best chances to recruit local talent if they respond to cultural preferences and offer an international and open-minded corporate culture.

The current EY BRIC report equals an additional business case for Diversity: It reconfirms the urgency for international companies to create and foster open-minded corporate cultures where inclusive behaviour prevails, and processes and policies support individual career development for talent globally. The scope includes and also goes beyond international mobility, which forms one element of the framework. Flexibility and cultural sensitivity are two more aspects where Diversity & Inclusion will directly contribute to tapping into the potential of BRIC countries – both on the market and on the talent side.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

European Union: A policy response to Gender Perceptions

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) published a discussion paper on presumable answers to biased Gender perceptions that still hinder talented men and especially women to show their abilities and follow their individual career path. The report starts by mentioning the numerous stereotypes, like images of so-called masculine or feminine educational studies and professions, the all too often quoted clash of maternity and career or gender roles in domestic work. All these over-generalised descriptions and depictions of ‘typical’ male or female behaviour lead to an ongoing unconscious segregation and to structural differentiation in social status. The difficult task for policy measures is to counteract the perceptions and to admit the historic contribution that each country has made to the emergence of this situation with policy measures and ill-guided educational approaches over decades and centuries.

Employers, educational institutions, the (mass) media, civil society organisations, the individual herself or himself as well as the partners and parents have been identified as both targets and triggers for change as well as barriers to a more comprehensive emancipation. Taking this into account, EIGE proposes a framework of policy objectives, policy fields, policy processes and policy priorities. Generally, the public policy process can enable change and maybe even develop new social patterns. Welfare or parental leave policies, divorce legislation and child custody policies effect and contribute to the changing roles for men and women, and they may strengthen the gender role perceptions in a traditional and in a pre-modern manner. The reduction of stereotypes and the promotion of individual life plans should be determined as an overarching objective of all legislation, the paper suggests. According to the EIGE “policy initiatives should build the awareness, provide the means, and establish the stimulus” so that the abovementioned different (target) groups can be enablers for change in relation to stereotypical gender perceptions. This recommendation actually provides an implicit criticism of the strong legislative, top-down approach the European Commission currently pursues especially on Gender equality. In contrast, the EIGE defines gender mainstreaming and social dialogue as the most relevant policy processes. The first one is explained as a recurring impact assessment of new rules or laws on common role models and social norms. Moreover, gender perceptions need to be discussed between all relevant key actors, stakeholders and the governments in order to avoid backslides within new legislations. To that end, policy-makers should take the dual earner model of households as the guiding concept (not the exception). Certainly, the paper provides a number of starting points for future gender initiatives looking at implicit stereotypes, including awareness campaigns, co-operation with civil society organisations or improvement in education and the media environment. What is needed is to move from discussion to concrete action.

First Diversity Position Paper of the European Federation of Employers' Association

Business Europe, the EU-level platform for employers' associations, has created its first position paper on Diversity Management at the European workplace. The ten pages summary calls out several drivers, advantages and approaches for reaching a diverse, inclusive and hence more successful business culture. While most of the paper will not seem to be ground-breaking for D&I practitioners, the fact that the largest and most important federation of employers' associations in Brussels is sending this message is fundamentally new. It raises hopes for more joint actions on the European or at least on the EU level. For the umbrella organisation unites more than 40 national employers' organisations like the French MEDEF, the German BDI or the British CBI from a total of 35 countries. Business Europe aims to "promote flexible and voluntary solutions at company level and encourage all stakeholders to look at diversity from a performance and competitiveness point of view" by publishing the paper. Demanding an active stance on Diversity is one of the key messages and in this way contrasts the very hesitating – if not reluctant – position of many national industry or employers' associations. Business Europe encourages a pro-active company-based impetus instead of waiting for (more) public legislation.

In their latest position paper, Business Europe describes a comprehensive approach to Diversity, equally including age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion and sexual orientation. Such broad views have become rare in recent years where most stakeholders focus on gender (and maybe internationality) and on few programmes. The reasoning behind is clear: only a truly diverse workforce will be innovative and best able to relate to complex markets. Business Europe also shows that Diversity management is required to address ageing workforces, increased migration, youth unemployment and changing social and cultural values as given factors. "This positive approach to Diversity will create best possible outcomes for business," Diversity expert Michael Stuber comments the paper's focus. "If companies consciously value and pro-actively include the differences of their stakeholders, they will utilise all resources in the best possible way, hence improving business results." Business Europe considers this nexus by highlighting the Return of Inclusion Investments practiced by many companies and the prospect of increased market coverage, a better employer branding and public image as well as an enhanced capacity to resolve internal conflicts. The lobbyists also recommend companies should set measureable objectives and monitor progress and successes.

BUSINESS CASE

3rd European Company Survey: Diversity as a trigger for future success

European companies face a variety of challenges including global competition, changing consumer demands and shortening product cycles. In order to remain innovative, adaptive and efficient, autonomous or semi-autonomous teamwork is one of the new formats currently introduced in

addition to the still prevailing management-directed teamwork. This is one of the trends identified by the 3rd European Company survey. Many results show that a systematic Diversity Management is increasingly needed to tackle the changes in the business landscape, e.g. regarding decentralised decision-making or the requirement to create high-performing heterogeneous teams.

The 3rd European Company Survey interviewed HR managers and employee representatives in 30,000 organisations in all EU member states and some neighbouring countries. The research is embedded in the overarching EU 2020 targets of smart, inclusive and sustainable growth. The European Commission grants a key role to all companies who need to facilitate innovation and creativity, ensure good job quality and develop human capital. The study provides a detailed picture of the current business landscape as well as past and future developments, and highlights both the importance as well as the advantages of Diversity Management.

Diversity of thoughts and skills is one key to future success for European business according to the 3rd European Company Survey. Making knowledge available for the entire company is an important field of work for a majority of companies surveyed (62%). Employees are hence increasingly obliged to keep track of their work and record best practices for their colleagues. Finding staff with the right skills constitutes another challenge for many companies; 39% of all respondents report issues in recruiting the talent they need. Once more, Diversity & Inclusion presents itself an enabler as it facilitates access to talent and improves the employer brand. Diversity also addresses employee engagement (motivation is an issue for 17% of the respondents, absenteeism for 13%). To get their D&I message across, however, companies should also consider Social Media (currently used by 24% of large companies).

Reliable Business Clients: Female Entrepreneurs successful in Spanish Crisis

Courage, persistence and a good amount of innovation capacity – being self-employed requires quite a high skill-set, especially within an economy witnessing unemployment rates up to 25%. This is the case on the Spanish labour market, which was most severely affected by the worldwide economic crisis. As part of the crisis, the survival of small Spanish businesses was also in danger and those that succeeded are clearly successful managers, certified by real life crises. Based on the results of a recently published report by the Spanish Self-Employed Federation (ATA), female entrepreneurs were more successful in overcoming the crisis than their male counterparts.

Between 2008 and 2012 more than 320,000 self-employed men were forced to interrupt or end their economic autonomy in Spain (14% of all entrepreneurs) while ‘only’ 63.500 female business owners had to close down (5.7%). Adding up the absolute numbers, more than 80% of all Spanish entrepreneurs sustaining an economic failure were men. This makes female businesses in Spain a stable and reliable business partner, within the country and for international business relationship.

The numbers should not lead to hast evaluations of male or female strengths though. Statistics show that men are more frequently owning a business in agriculture, transportation or industry, domains

that were especially vulnerable in the crisis, which was rooted in real estate sector. Meanwhile, numerous important sectors are dominated by female entrepreneurs including commerce, the hotel and restaurant sector, health or the financial and insurance industries. 1 million Spanish women form the highest share of self-employed persons (32.6%) in Europe. This number is closely followed by self-employed women in France, Belgium, Greece or Germany (all around 30%).

B2B companies should take into account the growing influence and importance of female entrepreneurs, especially when they relate to tourism, health or professional, scientific and technical services. The Spanish and similar previous studies are certainly wake-up calls for those who thought that Diversity was mainly for consumer-focused sectors.

MEDIA & BITS

The Story of the Chicken and the Egg: Diversity and the French Charter

Diversity Charters have become very fashionable over the past years in many countries and signatories love the public attention they get for their official commitment. However, questions were also raised around “green washing” a corporate image by simply signing a document without really engaging in D&I. In fact, the various Charters have implemented different levels and mechanisms to make sure (or not) that signatories follow through on their commitment. The French Diversity Charter, for instance, surveys their members on an annual basis and threatens to kick out those who don't reply two consecutive times. The current “Bilan Diversité 2013” shows the positive effects of this approach. 1,300 companies participated in the monitoring study and allowed insights into their practices and their workforce demographics. One result: compared to average French companies, charter signatories' workforces are more diverse.

According to the survey signatories with more than 50 employees have a female percentage of one third among their managers, compared to 31% in the average French company. Their disability share is 6%, compared to 3% as the French average. Signatories also report a more balanced age structure, meaning a larger number of younger as well as older employees. Gender, disability and age were found to be the most ‘important’ dimensions for the French signatories as they focus their activities on those issues. Integrating people from disadvantaged backgrounds – traditionally a very important topic in France – is only included in the Diversity framework of 23% of the signatories (who might of course cover the issue in another way). Far neglected is religious diversity (9%) and sexual orientation (10%), although these are slightly increased numbers compared to the previous survey (2012).

Asked about their motivation to engage in Diversity-Programmes the companies replied with improvements in HR-processes and the human capital (48%), the prevention of lawsuits and general respect of laws (39%) and a better economic performance due to Diversity (30%). Regarding

Diversity tools, raising awareness is still top of mind, but also monitoring progress becomes more important.

In the light of positive effects of Diversity Charters, the EU Commission seeks to promote the creation of additional charters in countries where no such format exists – the UK being the largest of those. In the Netherlands, a charter that only focuses on women in management exists.

Microsoft Apologises For Stereotyping ‘Older Women Can't Use Computers’

Simplification is a necessary strategy to cope with complexity. When it goes too far, we find categorisation or even stereotyping. At that stage, we will often offend people as we generalise and attribute characteristics coming from a certain group. Unfortunately, stereotypes are still commonly used in advertising – to get the message across when the creative designers are not creative enough. Often, the advertising companies had to learn their lessons the hard way, being faced with boycott (in the past) or online shit storms (nowadays). IT giant Microsoft – despite their own Diversity journey – recently had to apologise to their clients and to the public after having demonstrated low levels of sensitivity: They had related best aged women with low computer skills.

Microsoft had created an ad that should show the easy use of Microsoft Azure, a cloud platform. But the underlying cliché of women, especially older women, not being skilled in the IT area, was quickly criticised by ‘Geek Feminism Wiki’. The blog lists examples for ads or manuals based on the principle ‘So simple, even your (grand)mother could do it.’ It was second time Microsoft Azure was related to doubtful marketing. At the Norwegian Developers Conference (NDC) in 2012 Windows Azure was accompanied by dancing ladies, singing a sexist song that immediately led to vicarious embarrassment within the audience and another excuse by Microsoft a few days later. This time Microsoft excused for the branding and the poor judgement it showed. Not only the 24% female Microsoft employees hope the company takes this as a last and final warning shot and will ensure clever and balanced communication in future.

NEWS ABOUT US

Timeline and Publications Overview

Since 1997 European Diversity Research & Consulting is continually driving change and propelling the potential of personnel in the EMEA region. Our commitment to innovation in the field of D&I has been exemplified through a broad range of client projects, research and media publications as well as speaking engagements and we are happy to share all those landmarks with you in our updated Timeline (1997-2013) and a detailed publication and project overview. If you are interested to receive your copy, please write to office@europeandiversity.com

What our Clients say 'about us': KfW

“KfW goes through a holistic modernisation process targeted on strategic focus, professionalization, efficiency and customer orientation. This also includes corporate culture and in 2012 the KfW Executive Board approved a gender balance concept as one key element of this renewal process, which was honoured with the German Human Resources Management Award in 2013. I thank European Diversity for their professional support in the design and the adoption of that KfW framework. Lead consultant Michael Stuber combines high technical and methodological expertise with authentic persuasion. With this skill-set he has consistently focused on the alignment of our gender balance concept to the sustainable cultural change process. At the same time, he also recognised requirements in other areas at KfW and hence contributed to a credible integration of gender balance in the overall modernisation.”

Richard Kufferath-Sieberin, Director of HR Policy, KfW (June 2013)

IMPRINT

Published by **European Diversity Research & Consulting**, a pan-European service provider centred on adding value in the field of Diversity Management and Marketing. With 15 years of experience helping international companies in EMEA build effective, high-impact diversity and inclusion initiatives, we have quickly become the go-to, full-service source for research, communication and training in D&I.

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