

PROMOTING DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Within EQUAL, a range of different devices and instruments have been used to help to promote diversity within enterprises. These have included codes of conduct, equality audits, and tools to measure diversity and various diversity standards and awards. This case study looks at just a few of each of these types of stimuli that have been successfully tested over the past three years.

1. CODES OF CONDUCT

Although the draft legislation for the transposition of the two EU anti-discrimination Directives has been adopted by the Austrian Council of Ministers, the general public has not been made aware of these new acts. There is also reluctance on the part of policy makers in Austria to discuss issues like racism and anti-discrimination policies and this has led to a low level of awareness, which representatives of civil society, including NGOs, had not been able to redress.

Thus, the **Equal Opportunities in Companies** DP was confronted with many difficulties in trying to launch its ideas. So, perhaps it was not surprising that of the 60 firms or authorities that were initially contacted, only four were willing to become involved in the project. However, the DP learned a number of important lessons during this contact phase. For example, that the use of the term “discrimination” was less deterring than the term “racism”. Also reactions were more positive when the project was introduced with the name of the DP – “Equal Opportunities in Companies” – rather than with the name of the sponsoring NGO, ZARA – Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit, as this contains the term “anti-racism”.

One of the arguments that seemed to have been most successful was that EQUAL was an EU initiative and racism has become an important issue in the EU, which spends a lot of money on combating this phenomenon. It was also important that the project was financed by the EU and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour, which both enjoy a better reputation among representatives of companies and public authorities than an NGO like ZARA. Another motivating aspect was that if they developed and established a code of conduct, these companies would be better prepared for the implementation of the EU anti-discrimination directives and could also become examples of best practice and receive a quality award or seal.

In the end, the DP was left with only two enterprises and two public authorities but with the help of its partners, three more organisations came on board - one from the service sector and two within the public sector. The project finally reached its target of finding 6-8 companies that wanted to undergo the process of establishing a code of conduct.

This process is quite extensive and it can take up to a year to go through all of the steps. These include the establishment of a steering group that is responsible for carrying out the project in the company, the involvement of this group in awareness raising training, as well as an evaluation of the company to identify potential areas of discrimination and existing anti-discriminatory activities. These activities help to establish the areas of concern to be included in the code of conduct and then the DP accompanies the development and implementation of the code and, at the same time, introduces review procedures. In addition, the companies are offered training in the Austrian Equal Treatment Act (ETA) which transposes the two EU directives into Austrian legislation. Such courses incorporate a short introduction to the ETA and various examples of possible situations that the companies could face in their human resources management during recruitment, selection and dismissal procedures.

The long-term aim of the project is to have a much larger pool of enterprises that want to undergo the process of establishing a code of conduct. During the contact phase, there were several companies, that whilst not wishing to go as far as introducing a code of conduct, showed interest

in certain aspects of the project such as training. In the meantime, the DP is working on a strategy to involve these enterprises in a different way and to tailor its offers to their needs.

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*There is a particularly high concentration of migrants both in and around the city of Athens. The **Forum for Social Cohesion** DP believed that it was imperative to build a “business case for equality” based both on humanitarian grounds and business imperatives that would strengthen the employability of migrant groups.*

The main aim of the DP is to facilitate the inclusion of migrants and refugees in the labour market, with a parallel aim of overcoming racist and xenophobic reactions that hinder their economic and social integration. There are three main elements within the project:

- The development of a “Best Practices Report” including examples of enterprises that have successfully implemented policies for the employment of migrants and refugees and have ensured their full integration and assimilation into the working environment. This Report primarily records any barriers to this integration process and the methods and techniques that have been used to overcome these hurdles. It is a useful tool not only for the migrant labour force but also for companies that are concerned about, or interested in, the employability of migrants and refugees;
- The development of a “Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct” for the employment of migrants and refugees. Although this Code reflects the rules and provisions of the International Labour Organisation and other international and European agreements, it is relatively specific and thus, it can be easily applied in the Greek context;
- A process to sensitise and inform both the business community and the general public about issues concerning the employability of migrants and refugees and also to facilitate their integration into the Greek labour market.

The outcomes of the project include a business community that is more aware of issues surrounding the employment of migrants and refugees and of the process required for their smooth integration into the working and social environment in Greece. Thanks to the impact on public opinion of the Athens News Agency, which is the managing organisation of the DP, racist and xenophobic attitudes are being challenged and gradually changed.

It is expected that the “Best Practices Report” and the “Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct” will have an independent existence after the lifetime of the DP and will continue to be disseminated, in either printed or electronic format, to all interested employers, migrants and refugees.

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2. EQUALITY AUDITS

*The **Social Act** project was developed in 2001 and 2002, at a time when Flemish companies were unable to fill all of their vacancies. Under pressure from the shortage of labour, many companies opened their doors for the first time to groups like immigrants, semi- and unskilled workers, long-term unemployed and people with disabilities.*

Now, the Social Act wants to perpetuate the participation of these groups in the labour market and to give companies the tools to make a virtue of necessity when there are more people on the labour market as a result of increased unemployment. The Social Act has three basic functions as it:

- *Measures* - the project offers a free, user-friendly, online [self-screening instrument](#) that enables companies to find out the extent of their social commitment in their staffing policies. This test is called Sokratest because according to Socrates, “perception of self and others is the only true form of knowledge”;
- *Supports* - the helpdesk gives an analysis of strengths and weaknesses and identifies points that can be improved in the future. Together with the companies and external experts, the project aims to develop action plans that improve the firms’ social commitment. Companies can choose between two skills programmes: “Influx & Flow” and “Training & Education” and two motivation programmes: “Health & Welfare” and “Qualitime”;
- *Distributes* - following the successful implementation of the action plans, the Social Act places good practices in the spotlight. Such companies are recognised for their efforts and this also prompts and inspires other companies to follow these examples of good practice.

On the communication platform www.socialact.be, via the monthly review of the East-Flanders Chamber of Commerce and through testimonies given at the *Impulse Days* (study days) these good practices are highlighted. HR managers and directors attach much importance to this exchange and to sharing knowledge in 'soundboard groups' that are groups of innovators.

From a methodological point of view, the Social Act has learned a lot about self-screening and the Sokratest instrument has been revised and improved prior to a further expansion of the DP’s activities. Through the promoter Voka, (the East-Flanders Chamber of Commerce) and the wide 'Ghent, city at work' partnership, there is a broad platform for increasing awareness in the province. Also, as a result of collaboration with one of the project’s transnational partners, Sokratest will now be made available in the Netherlands on the website of the Dutch national CSR network, 'Samenleving & Bedrijf' (www.samen.nl).

The DP also wishes to continue the promotion of socially committed entrepreneurship in East Flanders. “Ghent, city at work” has meanwhile provided the impetus to set up a regional working group called *Added Value Economy*. In collaboration with this working group, Social Act can take initiatives that favour sustainability. In addition, the Social Act is continuing its talks with “Business & Society”, the Belgian network for CSR. In this way, it hopes to extend its implementation and to develop a larger support-base at a national level.

In its “Triple P Viewpoint” (Planet - Profit - People), the Social Act develops progressive ideas, innovative actions and tools that strengthen the 'People' pillar. By promoting individual reflection and the development of a communication platform on socially committed entrepreneurship, it urges enterprises to take action either within the company itself or in regard to external stakeholders, such as the families of employees or future employees.

The project sees diversity as a fact. This implies that all the workers in a company should no longer approach mutual differences as shortcomings or risks, but as talents and opportunities.

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*The **DREAM** DP in Greece was very aware of the importance of the media in shaping public opinion and also of the fact there were very few professionals working in the industry who came from ethnic minority or migrant backgrounds. It felt that one answer to this problem was to make cultural diversity part of the reality of regional and national broadcasting and thus, to reduce the chances of media output reinforcing racism, stereotyping or cultural clichés.*

However, DREAM also recognised that the culture of media organisations tends to produce managers and other members of staff who have full agendas, are not particularly committed to any social objectives and are not used to cooperating with other bodies in the social sector such as training centres and voluntary organisations. Therefore, the only answer was to show media companies what they would gain from employing people from ethnic minority or migrant backgrounds.

DREAM dreamed up the idea of an Equality Audit. This innovative process involves both the application of guidelines and the provision of consultancy and acknowledges that every media organisation has its own particular environment and its own specific needs. It gradually helps employers and workers to understand the benefits of recruiting people from minority or migrant backgrounds. The DP explains these benefits as:

- Widening the audience;
- Increasing profits from alternative types of advertisements;
- Providing new sources of information for journalists;
- Developing the organisational culture;
- Improving the company's image in terms of its social responsibility.

This process is then backed up by targeted training for representatives of ethnic minority and migrant groupings who are largely recruited through NGOs that work with these minority populations. The training takes account of the requirements of the company in which the “trainee” will undertake a placement. This placement is also subsidised for a few months in the case of companies that are willing to provide continuing employment if the placement proves to be successful. For example, a regional editor had participated in an “equality audit” workshop and was thinking about “opening” his newspaper. After some consultancy and market research, he decided that having a daily column in Albanian might increase the newspaper’s circulation. An Albanian immigrant, trained in journalism was recruited and the job position was subsidised for a few months. This was enough time for the newspaper to set up the column and become convinced about the higher circulation and so the post was made permanent.

To date, 16 media organisations have been involved, 14 people have gained jobs through this “opening up to diversity” process and another 30 people from ethnic minority backgrounds have been trained in specific media professions. The equality audit is being developed in co-operation with the Greek Ministry of Press, which will be able to promote and sustain the “equality audit” and other good practices that emerge from this EQUAL project.

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3. TOOLS TO MEASURE DIVERSITY

In the [Vision Partnership in Denmark](#) DP, Falck A/S which provides a rescue service for motorists set itself the target of integrating 300 - 400 people from ethnic minorities over the next five years. The ground has been prepared for this ambitious development in conjunction with RevaCenter Århus Nord, which is a public rehabilitation centre and has provided a facilitator for this project.

A tool has been developed to measure the degree of openness and diversity in the company's departments and management. This is based on studies of the Danish measurement tool the [Social Index](#) and was applied by using a combination of individual questionnaires and individual interviews. This process was completed during the initial project meeting.

Following this meeting, the facilitator drafted a report on the personnel structure, and the employees', shop stewards', managers', and executives' attitudes to, and experiences of, diversity. The report also covered recruitment, job retention, competences and work culture in relation to people from ethnic minorities.

In addition, the facilitator has developed a proposal for a plan of action, and a “tool box” for its implementation. This plan of action and the “tool box” will take account of relevant experiences from different DPs and centres in Denmark. It is expected that the “tool box” will contain a virtual tool, which will promote team building and thus, support a departmental learning process.

The project has both short-term and long-term perspectives. In the short term, the approach is geared to producing concrete results in four large departments in Falck A/S, and in the long term, to involving the entire national parent company. If successful, it will ensure massive recruitment of employees from ethnic minorities.

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4. STANDARDS FOR SUCCESS

*One of the objectives of the **Different People** DP is the identification, implementation and quantification of the critical success factors for the optimal use of diverse talents in favour of customer service, profit and/or results of the organisation.*

The first steps in developing the critical success factors were brainstorming sessions that addressed the following questions:

- What and whom do you need in your organisation in order to implement diversity management?
- How can you do it?
- What are the catalysing factors?
- What are the restraining factors that you should try to minimize?

In close cooperation, the three partner organisations in the DP developed a first list of 9 factors but these have been constantly been sharpened and modified to produce a final list of 10 factors. The project has now established a Diversity Indicator which is a measurement tool based on this list of factors. The Diversity Indicator is intended as a means of stimulating managers to do something about diversity management. It quickly gives managers, directors, workers and staff members a general picture of diversity themes within their own organisation. By using the Diversity Indicator, organisations can realise why they should work on diversity management and what it will yield in the near future.

The Ten Factors for Success

1. A clear vision regarding Diversity and Diversity management in relation to the organisation’s overall vision (both economic and social)
2. Broad support and commitment from the board *and* management, ensuring benefit and need are recognised throughout the whole organisation.
3. Board *and* management are evaluated on the basis of actions and behaviour.
4. All of the personnel have knowledge of, and an insight into, handling differences.
5. Knowledge, insight and competence regarding diversity management at management level.
6. Consolidate diversity principles in realistic goals with regards to strategic personnel policy, communication policy, marketing policy and management style.
7. Insight into the competences of all personnel in relation to competences relevant to the organisation.
8. Sufficient diversity at all levels of the organisation.
9. The existence of, or the ability to steer towards, an organisational culture characterised by a willingness to change and an open-mindedness towards diverse behaviour and ways of thinking.

10. Ability to demonstrate the added value of diversity to customers and other people who relate to the organisation.

For the purposes of the project 'Different People', the partners have defined the term 'diversity management' to mean:

"Diversity management is the optimal utilisation of all the diverse talents of individual employees in favour of customer service, profit and/or results of the organisation. The under utilization of these talents happens primarily (but not exclusively) in relation to the factors of gender, age, ethnic background and disability."

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The key factor in this process is that the management and the HRM department are deeply involved in the identification and implementation of the critical success factors. Organisations can be inspired by the above list but they really need to establish a set of factors for themselves as this increases the sense of ownership. The project feels that "If you put them up on your own and these are the key factors for the success for your diversity management strategy, you want to work on them: increase the positive factors and minimise the restraining factors."

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SONAR (operating system activation resources) is an EQUAL DP working across the boundary between two Italian regions - Piedmont and Lombardy. In this area, there is a low unemployment rate, around 3%, and a reasonably high quality of life, but despite these factors there is still a problem of discrimination in employment that especially concerns people with physical or mental disabilities.

The DP came up with two solutions to motivate entrepreneurs to employ people with disabilities. The first was to provide a strong and effective support service, particularly through a case manager. Now the entrepreneurs have the confidence that the people who are being placed have been carefully selected and matched and that the case manager will continue to provide support during the placement period.

The second was to offer the inducement of easy access to public resources, marketing and free promotion, all provided by the Province of Novara, if these enterprises, in turn, were willing to provide placements in line with certain criteria of social responsibility. The criteria that the DP defined were as follows:

- The ability to self-evaluate and to devote an appropriate level of attention and sensitivity to the themes of social responsibility and possibly to prepare a charter of values;
- Adherence to the methodologies and management tools that SONAR has adopted, both on the external relations front and on the internal management front;
- Formal identification of the role of the agency tutor (its definition, if not in prescriptive terms, then in at least in descriptive terms);
- The availability of procedures and guidelines and, in addition, recording procedures in at least the form of ship's log or diary - all of which should be coherent with the management process;
- Adherence to the above criteria and the use of the monitoring and evaluation instruments.

The take up has been good and many enterprises have adopted these criteria because they are also anxious to take advantage of the promotional opportunities offered by the Province of Novara.

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