



Summary of the High Level Event “Managing Diversity in Practice: How to value differences and inclusion for growth in Europe” held on 31 October 2012 in Vienna

Opening plenary session

The opening panel session was moderated by diversity expert, Maria Hegarty, who announced that Brigitte Jank, President of the Vienna Economic Chamber, unfortunately had to cancel her participation in the event.

Opening of the High Level Event by the Austrian State Secretary for Integration, Sebastian Kurz

The patron of the event, State Secretary Kurz welcomed all speakers and guests to the conference. In his opening speech he outlined the new challenges that Austrian society has been facing over the last decades with the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of its population. Aiming at making the public debate about integration more objective, Austrian integration policies have worked to provide the framework for migrants’ active participation in all aspects of Austrian society in order to make full use of people’s potential regardless of their ethnic background.

In this context, Mr Kurz underlined that labour market integration is a key factor that can contribute to the feeling of belonging and successful integration. To this end, the Austrian government together with the Austrian Chamber of Commerce has launched the so-called “mentoring for migrants” project to attract skilled migrant workers from abroad.

Moreover, Mr. Kurz stressed the important role enterprises play in this context and complimented the work of the Diversity Charters, signing the Austrian Diversity Charter on behalf of the State Secretariat for Integration.

Opening of the High Level Event by the European Commission, Directorate-General Justice, Joanna Serdyska

Joanna Serdyska from the Directorate-General Justice stressed the European Commission’s role in supporting the Member States as well as businesses to implement diversity strategies, even more so in the current difficult economic situation. She underlined the need for innovative policy responses to the demographic change that European societies are currently undergoing in terms of age, rising disability rates, increasing migration from non-Member States and changing gender roles.

She emphasised that diversity management is not only the legal, moral and right business practice but it also makes good business sense which more and more companies are recognising.



In line with the priorities of the Europe 2020 agenda, it should be the objective to turn diversity into a growth driver for both public and private organisations alike. In this context, Ms Serdyska highlighted the work of the Austrian “Charta der Vielfalt” and the other European Diversity Charters, thanking the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and the Vienna Economic Chamber for their hospitality and support in organising this event.

Opening of the High Level Event by the Vice President of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, Renate Römer

In her address to the plenary, Ms Römer outlined the tremendous progress that has been made in Austria in the field of integration and gender policies over the last decades which has seen an increasing number of women in leading positions and a growing rate of migrant workers employed in Austrian companies. In view of these achievements, she is especially proud that the Austrian “Charta der Vielfalt” is leading the way for other European charters to follow.

She stressed the Federal Economic Chamber’s responsibility in raising awareness among businesses of the economic opportunities diversity generates for enterprises. As a management tool, diversity becomes assessable, once it is assessable it will become measurable, once it is measurable it will allow comparison. Companies who do not realise this chance will sooner or later feel the negative effects. To convince businesses, one needs companies who lead the way and people who actually live according to these principles.

Round table dialogue on valuation of differences to induce inclusion and promote growth in the European Union with

As an opening to the round table dialogue, moderator Maria Hegarty invited all panellists to address the audience in a short speech.

Alessandra Servidori, National Equality Counsellor at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, Italy

Ms Servidori took the floor introducing the work of the Italian Government of promoting diversity and equal opportunities, especially in the field of gender equality. She stressed that in times of financial and economic crisis, it has become even more important to look at HR practices. Facing new realities, companies need to adapt and promote a new form of employment; this is true for large companies as well as SMEs. In signing the Diversity Charter and also by introducing new equality legislation, the Italian Ministry has reaffirmed its commitment to the equality of women and all workers. Moreover, the Ministry has developed a wide range of instruments and studies to support companies in their efforts to introduce diversity strategies.



Helen Cooke, Business Disability Forum

Helen Cooke started her speech by introducing the work of the Business Disability Forum, which shares best practice with more than 600 member organisations, and her own business My + Consulting, which helps employers to build confidence in working with people with disabilities. She went on to explain that in the United Kingdom quota systems for employing people with disabilities have been abandoned because they contain an inherent contradiction; one the one hand, employers are looking to recruit talent but, on the other hand, they are supposed to hire disabled people who are “damaged” in some way; they should be treated fairly but receive special treatment. Instead of using quotas, the UK aims to implement best practice based on talent, customer satisfaction and fair treatment. This system not only benefits employers who get to hire the most talented employees but also the workers who want to be hired based on their performance.

Ms Cooke went on to explain why employers in the UK have chosen this path. In view of increasing numbers of workers with disabilities and an aging workforce, employers need to accommodate people with disabilities because a lot of talent would be lost otherwise and it costs to retrain workers. In addition, a breach of the Equality Act cannot only cost large sums in fines but also means a severe damage in a company’s reputation. Finally, companies are persuaded to implement diversity strategies because they fear to be left behind their competitors.

Tamás Kádár, Equinet

Tamás Kádár started by explaining the role of Equinet in providing peer support and a platform for dialogue for European businesses. Equality bodies have diverse mandates but foremost they aim to work with companies as partners who provide practical support rather than taking the role of enemies due to their sanctioning powers. Support offered by equality bodies to companies includes help in raising awareness for diversity issues in the form of evaluation and feedback, diversity trainings including a practical toolbox, and an employer’s platform for good practice exchange. Mr Kádár closed his speech by underlining the need for going beyond preaching to the converted by reaching out to other companies, convincing them that societal costs of not implementing diversity strategies is much higher.

Annemie Maquil, City of Luxembourg

Ms Maquil described the diverse make-up of the City of Luxembourg’s population which has made it necessary for decision makers to adapt diversity initiatives in order to serve the needs of its citizens. The city’s diversity initiatives focus on recruitment and integration (e.g. specific programmes to introduce female workers in male-dominant professions); non-discriminatory HR processes and work conditions (e.g. procedures in case of sexual harassment), trainings for workers to improve their diversity competencies (e.g. for bus drivers), and, finally public relations.

A major challenge the City has faced is related to the fact that as a political organisation, policies are based on needs of voters which excludes the 40% of foreign citizens. Also, legislation



requires public servants to have sufficient Luxemburgish, French, and German language skills which once more excludes citizens from a migrant background. Opportunities include the fact that as a local government the city can act on social rather than only economic criteria. Also, the city's visibility is high and it can act as a role model for other public and private organisations.

Eleonora Pessina, Pirelli

Ms Pessina, Group Sustainability and Equal Opportunities Manager at Pirelli, presented how Pirelli has developed a strategy of integrating sustainable management in the value chain which has created sustainable growth for the company. This system is supported by an organizational structure in which sustainability and equal opportunities managers in all local Pirelli branches report to the Group Sustainability and Equal Opportunities Manager who reports to the Sustainability Steering Committee responsible to the CEO. Ms Pessina then went on to present the diversity management guidelines and tools that Pirelli has been applying in terms of employee valuation and governance. These include, for example, third party audits, Group Whistleblowing Procedures, allowing employees to confidentially report violations of the company's ethical code to an internal audit department, special diversity trainings for employees, and group-wide opinion surveys among employees.

Panel discussion

Following the presentation of the panellists, the audience had the opportunity to address their questions to the speakers on stage. Discussion questions and comments from the audience included, for example:

- How do you see your interaction with other stakeholders represented on the panel?
- Is certification possible now and what is the value of certification? On the one hand, panellists have underlined that the diversity management is measurable, others have underlined that human resources cannot be certified or measured because people are involved. What is the advantage/disadvantage of external/internal audits? What is the value of diversity management in the context of the ongoing economic and financial crisis?
- A representative of the Social Platform commented that gender came up over and over again in the presentations in the context of which it was always discussed how minority groups can be better integrated into majority groups; however, she suggested that it should also be considered how men can be integrated into the female labour market. Progress will remain slow if we keep simply exchanging best practice. People should always be selected on talent; in this context, quotas are not the end result but a tool which help to work to this end.



Presentation of the workshops' results and way forward, moderated by diversity expert, Michael Stuber

Diversity expert Michael Stuber led through the closing plenary session of the High Level Event, inviting selected speakers from each of the eight workshops on stage to summarise the key outcomes and discussion points of their respective workshops in the context of the messages deriving from the plenary sessions.

Diversity in the Public Sector

The workshop discussed how public administrations fill their dual role of, on the one hand, creating an environment and a regulatory framework for the private sector to implement equality strategies but at the same time are responsible for managing diversity internally in their own organisations. Also, the crucial role of public authorities to support national equal bodies was underlined in this context. It was recommended that public organisations use their existing structures on the regional and local level to reach out to small and medium-sized companies and facilitate the creation of partnerships.

Enlargement of the Charter Platform

The workshop facilitated a discussion between established or newly created charters and those that are in the founding process. The group also discussed the role of public authorities in the promotion of Diversity Charters. In this context, the partnership between public and private organisations was stressed as key success factor bringing together all relevant stakeholders. The increasing number of public-private partnerships represents a paradigm shift in the role of public administrations functioning as partners rather than merely legislative bodies.

Leveraging Cultural Diversity for Global Leadership & Talent Mobility

The workshop focused on the impact increasing migration has on businesses and communities in Europe. Speakers underlined that companies need to share best practices but even more crucial is the change of mindsets and individual behaviors, which might in some cases mean leaving one's comfort zone. The workshop also introduced practical e-tools to help managers and owners of SMEs to include immigrants in the workplace and leverage their cultural knowledge. In addition, different paradigms around global leadership were presented and discussed, and sample tools how to create effective discussions were shared.

Demographic Change: Challenge or Chance?

The workshop discussed whether multigenerational workforces create more opportunities or more challenges for businesses. In the end, workshop participants did not find a definite answer to this question. The workshop presented European figures highlighting the ongoing demographic change; although numbers vary considerably from country to country, the overall trend shows an aging workforce across Europe. The example of BMW's strategy showed that the demographic change can also lead to a more diversified workforce as increasing numbers of



employees from other European countries as well as women were hired to fill the demographic gap.

The Challenges of Reporting Diversity

The workshop introduced a variety of self-assessment tools for organisations to start capturing their diversity status. One question in this context was whether this reporting should happen for internal or external purposes especially since results might appear to be weak. Also, reporting on strands such as sexual orientation or religion/belief poses a challenge as employees might feel reluctant to provide such personal information especially in SMEs. Here privacy rights might interfere with employers' willingness to implement diversity strategies. The workshop therefore recommended a holistic case-by-case approach and recommended to use external sources for general data.

Diversity and Inclusion Measurement Framework

In this workshop, *The Diversity and Inclusion Measurement Framework* developed by the Charter platform was presented along with practical examples from Equalizent Schulungs - und BeratungsGmbH, Deutsche Telekom and Folksam. While Deutsche Telekom succeeded by the introduction of quotas to increase the numbers of female employees in management positions, Folksam was able to identify a direct cause and effect between the number of hired staff with migrant background and an increased market share. Also, the question came up of how to measure employees' sexual orientation or religious belief. Finally, workshop participants underlined that measuring should not only focus on numbers but should be closely related to the objectives behind measuring and be part of an overall communication strategy.

Diversity Tools: Recipes for Managing Diversity in the Workplace

The workshop discussed several practical diversity management tools, underlining that easy-to-use tools exist but are not applied as much as they could be by business, sometimes because they are free of charge. The tools should help to implement a system to realise a long-term strategy. The FEED model from Sweden encourages a shift from practice to quality, and pursues the continuous improvement approach.

Diversity and SMEs: Best Practice and Tools

This workshop presented some concrete success stories of SMEs who have implemented diversity strategies, highlighting how also smaller companies can benefit from applying diversity management tools and, as a result, increase their bottom lines. The challenge however has been to convince the owner's of SMEs of the business case for diversity. The focus should be on hiring talent and the message to them needs to be that if you refuse diversity, you will refuse performance. It was also underlined in the workshop that adequate tools are needed but also well-designed communication strategy to disseminate this message.