23RD AUGUST 2013: WORKSHOP IN LIECHTENSTEIN

Liechtenstein needs better work-life balance and more women in management

The EQUALITY PAYS OFF workshop in Liechtenstein brought together 30 representatives from national and international companies situated in Liechtenstein and nearby Swiss cantons along with representatives of the public sector and civil society. The event on 23 August 2013 was supported by the Liechtenstein Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Liechtensteinische Industrie- und Handelskammer, LIHK) and the Labour Union of Liechtenstein (Liechtensteinischer ArbeitnehmerInnenverband, LANV).

Opening, Brigitte Haas (LIHK) said it was important that competitive companies in Liechtenstein fully tap the female workforce potential. Reintegrating women after maternity leave is a main challenge. Sigi Langenbahn (LANV) said equality should be seen as an opportunity rather than an obligation for companies since facilitating better reconciliation of professional and private life pays off. Bernadette Kubik-Risch, former Director of the Equal Opportunities Department explained the legal obligations of gender equality in Liechtenstein such as maternity and paternity leave and recent legislation on remuneration.

The participants identified the very low rate of female applicants for jobs in certain sectors and for management positions as a core challenge. They called for broader public discussion to enhance support for balancing work and family demands, noting that better work-life balance benefits companies’ performance as well as being a moral obligation.

In a good practice presentation Thomas Kornexl of Swarovski said promoting work-life balance is essential to retaining top female talent and raising the number of women in management. Caroline Durig-Gemmi, a mother and manager at Swarovski, said combining work and family life successfully, as she has done, requires that employer and employee communicate regularly to assess whether existing arrangements still work or need adjusting. Ongoing dialogue is the only way to enable forward planning while remaining as flexible as possible.

Patric Aeberhard of the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality focused on the issue of remuneration and presented the Logib tool for pay structure analysis. There was broad consensus among participants that paying male and female employees equally is crucial for attracting and retaining the best female talent, especially in a country whose first major legislation on equal professional opportunities for men and women dates back only to 1999.

The EQUALITY PAYS OFF Advocate for Liechtenstein, Bernhard Pleschko, stressed that the responsibility for equal pay and equal opportunities for female employees lies with four groups of stakeholders – men, women, government and companies. Only a holistic approach can bring ongoing and sustainable improvement, he said. He called upon all four groups to do their part to achieve true gender equality in companies in Liechtenstein.
"Women carry a disproportionately high load of responsibility for the well-being of our society"

What was your motivation to actively contribute to EQUALITY PAYS OFF?
Bernhard Pleschko: Both in my personal and my professional life I realise that women carry a disproportionately high load of responsibility for the well-being of our society. However, this is not appreciated adequately: neither in terms of personal recognition, of fair remuneration nor of equal opportunities for personal growth. Changing actively something in my sphere of influence has always been one of my personal objectives.

What is your advice for companies on better tapping the female talent?
Bernhard Pleschko: Businesses have to ensure fair and equal treatment focusing on three key areas: providing a flexible work environment which allows women to better manage their different roles, supporting and developing women through training and promotion, and, finally, treating all employees with the same respect by guaranteeing fair compensation and pay.

Bernhard Pleschko is Executive Vice President Supply Chain Management at Swarovski

The commitment of management and Human Resources is key for the successful implementation of living equality. The audience present in Vaduz showed the distinct interest of key people in this topic.

Monika Stur, Managing Director Zen Asset Management

Workshop Focus
The workshop focused on work-life balance, work organisation and remuneration.

The workshop emphasised that it takes time to set up the smoothly functioning organisation of work needed to ensure good work-life balance. Serious commitment and good communication between employers and employees, for example regarding re-entry expectations, are essential.

The gender pay gap in Liechtenstein is higher than in most other European countries. Among several factors are the high level of part-time working among women and sharp horizontal segregation. This starts with educational choices and leads to employment inequality by gender across business sectors.
In general, there is scope for companies in Liechtenstein to improve how they access female talent:

- Over 51% of women in Liechtenstein work part time compared with the EU average of 32%\(^1\)\(^2\).
- With women earning 18% less than men for equal work, the Liechtenstein gender pay gap is above the 16% EU average\(^3\).
- The lack of data for the share of women on boards and in management positions suggests a need to further raise awareness.

For statistical comparability and completeness, EU-27 data is used for all statistical indicators as EU-28 data is not available yet.

Source: Eurostat LFS 2012 (data from 2011), Liechtenstein Statistical Office 2013 (data from 2011)


Equality PAYS OFF provides a platform for the national business community in 34 country-specific workshops to exchange their experience and know-how on better tapping the female talent pool.

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