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Good Practices in Social Security

Good practice in operation since: 2016

Development of a diversity code and creation of the “respect tool”

Certificate of Merit with Special Mention, ISSA Good Practice Award – Europe competition 2019

National Employment Office
Belgium

Summary

The National Employment Office (Office national de l'emploi – ONEM) is responsible for managing unemployment insurance schemes and career break schemes (parental leave, etc.). Like most social security institutions, it is confronted by a great diversity of customers and staff.

In 2016, ONEM created a reference tool in the field of diversity: the Diversity Code. It includes concrete rules on how employees should behave when dealing with colleagues and customers, taking into account differences in language, age, gender, skin colour, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, social status and disability.

The code formalizes the institution's commitment to diversity and the fight against discrimination.

In order to implement the code within the organization, ONEM has opted for an original and innovative approach based in particular on corporate theatre and serious games (education through games). The project was awarded the 2016 Diversity Award for best practice in diversity in the Belgian Federal Civil Service.

The issue or challenge

What was the issue or challenge addressed by your good practice? Please provide a short description.

The National Employment Office (ONEM) is responsible for managing unemployment insurance schemes and career break schemes (parental leave, etc.). Like most social security institutions, it is confronted by a great diversity of customers and staff. More than 1 million people of almost every nationality in the world receive benefits from ONEM every year. Among its 3,100 employees, the Office itself has staff from 47 different countries.

The Diversity Code ensures that all ONEM employees are “professional” with regard to diversity in the workplace.

The development of this code and its implementation signalled that ONEM wanted to take up a triple challenge. The Office wanted to formalize its commitment to diversity and to fight against discrimination. In addition, the aim was to provide managers and employees with a reference framework that would allow them to respect diversity through the skills and behaviour of employees. Finally, the aim was to inform employees about ONEM's diversity policy.

It should also be added that ONEM has also had codes of ethics for a long time, but they do not contain such precise and concrete rules in terms of diversity.

Addressing the challenge

What were the main objectives of the plan or strategy to resolve the issue or challenge? List and briefly describe the main elements of the plan or strategy, focusing especially on their innovative feature(s) and expected or intended effects.

Development of the “diversity code”: Forty employees from different offices and the central administration participated on a voluntary basis in the creation of the diversity code. Accompanied by an external consultant, participants discussed:

- how they wanted to position themselves at ONEM with regard to differences in the workplace: language, age, gender, skin colour, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, social status, disability;
- the behaviour expected of each employee in this respect in their relations with colleagues and customers.

The fruits of these reflections have been compiled and translated into a number of concrete rules of conduct, in the form of an 18-page code that is very simple and illustrated with examples.

Embedding the diversity code in the organization:

- the development of the “respect tool” (*serious game*) to assimilate the rules of the diversity code in a playful way. This game was designed in-house but developed by a company specializing in games;
- corporate theatre for the line management;
- the creation of a “diversity quiz”;
- the proposal of development objectives as part of the evaluation cycle.

Targets to be achieved

What were the quantitative and/or qualitative targets or key performance indicators that were set for the plan or strategy? Please describe briefly.

- The development of a diversity code.
- The development of the “respect tool”, based on serious games.
- The training of 68 employees, who acted as “coaches” for the “respect tool”.
- The participation of 377 executives from the organization in the corporate theatre.
- The organization of 159 diversity awareness sessions with the “respect tool” in offices and central administration. A total of 1,392 employees attended these sessions.
- The participation of 720 employees in the diversity quiz.



A team of employees assimilates the rules of the diversity code by playing the “respect tool” (based on serious games).

Evaluating the results

Has there been an evaluation of the good practice? Please provide data on the impact and outcomes of the good practice by comparing targets vs. actual performance, before-and-after indicators, and/or other types of statistics or measurements.

The results of the September 2018 satisfaction survey of ONEM staff show a high level of satisfaction with “interpersonal relations”. The question about good contacts with colleagues achieved a 95.8 per cent satisfaction rate. The one on equal treatment achieved 88.2 per cent satisfaction. The question about trustworthy individuals in the organization in the fight against undesirable behaviour achieved 84.4 per cent satisfaction.

In 2018, no formal psychosocial intervention requests were submitted.

Finally, in 2017, 98.5 per cent of visitors were satisfied or very satisfied with the reception they received at ONEM. In 2018, no complaints of discrimination were lodged by social security contributors against ONEM with the competent authorities.

Lessons learned

Based on the organization’s experience, name up to three factors which you consider as indispensable to replicate this good practice. Name up to three risks that arose/could arise in implementing this good practice. Please explain these factors and/or risks briefly.

Success factors:

- the mobilization and commitment of the employees involved in drafting the diversity code and in accompanying awareness sessions with the “respect tool”;
- the innovative approach to embedding the diversity code in the organization, namely corporate theatre and the serious game;
- support from the hierarchy and good collaboration between the various internal departments involved in the implementation of the diversity code (National Training Centre, diversity unit, communication department, etc.).

The risks:

- the difficulty of drafting a code with simple rules of behaviour in a sensitive area and in the absence of a model;
- a lack of communication about the added value of a diversity code in the organization;
- a lack of commitment on the part of employees to awareness-raising actions.