

OSLO STUDY REPORT – MIGRATION 2 MANAGEMENT

The visit to Oslo was a very enlightening one and a lot was ascertained from partners around the current policies and legislations adopted in the various countries relating to the equity of employment for immigrants.

In the UK the code by which we operate when recruiting employees and selecting employees for promotion is in accordance with government legislation around Equal Opportunities. Any recruitment or promotion within the UK has to be carried out in line with this legislation and any employer found not to be recruiting or selecting accordingly carries the risk of being taken to an employment tribunal. The tribunal would then examine the case and if an employer is found to be “breaking the law” then the tribunal would decide to either award damages or agree suitable re-employment for the individual concerned.

This said, employers do break the law within the UK but unless they are challenged by an individual then the “law breaking” goes unnoticed and herein lies the root of our problems, as not enough of our working population are aware of their rights and thus law breaking by employers, in relation to recruitment and selection, goes unchallenged. New immigrants to the UK may well be subject to discrimination as a result of a lack of knowledge around complex legislation in relation to their rights to be treated fairly when applying for jobs or promotion.

Current legislation within the UK covers age, gender, sexual orientation, race, disability and religion or belief.

On 1 October 2007 the three equality commissions in the UK merged into the new Equality and Human Rights Commission:

- + Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)
- + Disability Rights Commission (DRC)
- + Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)

The previous websites of these commissions are now the new Equality and Human Rights Commission website: www.equalityhumanrights.com

The 1991-2001 UK census shows that 8.3% of the UK population at the time were born abroad, although the census gives no indication of their immigration status or their intended length of stay.

Surprises

I think that the initial surprise for us in the UK when listening to partner presentations was the lack of access we have to reliable up-to-date UK statistics around immigration. It appeared to us that central governments in other European countries had far superior systems in place for the capturing of such data and as a result organisations can work towards developing effective and appropriate strategies for overcoming barriers that exist.

The Norwegian presentation touched on the fact that they had recently implemented a ruling within Norway to positively discriminate women into management roles within the public sector and I found their efforts to be admirable but was taken aback by the fact that some European countries today still needed to positively promote women as managers in the workplace as it is the general view that the UK has made great strides in this area although there are still a few “male dominated” labour market sectors.

The Danish presentation provided “food for thought” as they described the current opinion on discrimination within their society and the creative ways in which they go about trying to breakdown these barriers and alter the populist opinion that exists when employing people of immigrant origin. I think that the UK could learn a lot from the creative strategies used by the Danes and apply some of those strategies to employers in the UK to ensure that UK legislation is effective and adhered to when employing people of ethnic origin.

In summary, the partner presentations were highly informative and outlined the various opinions, facts and strategies surrounding immigration in relation to their particular country and I feel that the mobilities to each of the partner countries will provide opportunities to explore the subject more and thus identify and share good practice amongst the partner countries.