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COUNSELLING PROVIDER “COMPANY VALUE: HUMAN” IN GERMANY

Abstract

The German program “Company value: Human” (unternehmensWert:Mensch) is offered nationwide and supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) to develop a sustainable staff policy. The professional counselling comprises issues like communication, organization of work, promotion of health and transfer of knowledge.

1. OVERVIEW

Demographic change, skills shortages and shortages of young people – the personal requirements of enterprises are manifold. Commitment of skilled workers is an intersectoral demand. But small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) often have a lack of resources to manage these demands. The counselling program “Company value: Human” (unternehmensWert: Mensch) offers custom-fit counselling services and supports SME to develop modern and employee-focused personal strategies. The program was tested successful in a model phase from October 2012 to December 2014 and it is offered nationwide since 2015.

2. OFFERS OF THE PROGRAM

The program supports SME to develop a sustainable and employee-focused staffing policy. This includes counselling in four action fields: “personal management”, “equality of opportunity and diversity”, “health” and “management of knowledge and competence”. In this fields professional counsellors, employer and employees develop tailor-made concepts and measures for a successful staffing policy.

The counselling offer is supported. Depending on the size of the enterprise 50 to 80 percent of the costs of counselling are accepted by the provider.

3. AIM OF THE PROGRAM

The program has the aim to initiate sustainable processes of learning and changing in enterprises. This comprises:

- to sensitize SME for future challenges,
- to give concrete support to enterprises to develop and implement a employee-focused staffing policy,
- to empower SME to react independent and adequate on different in-plant challenges of changes in the world of work and production and the demographic change,

- to establish a corporate culture which supports the arrangements of conditions of work and production in a motivational, healthy and innovative way and which supports the recruitment and commitment of skilled workers.

These aims are supported with a professional process of counselling.

4. THREE STEPS OF COUNSELLING TO ACTIVATE PROCESSES OF CHANGE

4.1. First counselling helpline

In the first counselling the enterprise meets a first contact person for all questions and a pilot through the program. The counsellor clarifies the eligibility and identifies the concrete operational needs of change of the enterprise within four staffing policy action fields. Subsequent the support is clarified. When the enterprise fulfills the support conditions it gets a check of counselling to start the process counselling.

4.2. Process counselling

The second step is the process counselling. The enterprise can choose a counsellor from the pool counsellors which are accredited for the program. The process counselling takes place directly in the enterprise. The counselor together with the employer and the employees and possibly a person from the employee welfare committee develops accurately fitting solutions strategies. The process counselling comprises up to ten counselling days which can be used in a period of nine month.

4.3. Conclusion conversation

Six months after finishing the counselling process a conversation takes place with the first counsellor of the helpline, the employer and the representation of the employees welfare committee to discuss the gained results in a third step of the program. Here possible continuing offers of support are discussed in order to unfold long-term effects of the triggered changes.

5. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

The first counselling in the helpline is free of costs. When the counselling ends with delivering a counselling check the subsequent counselling can be financially promoted. Enterprises have the legitimation for a support offer when they fulfill following criteria:

- Place of business and place of work in Germany
- Annual sales less than 50 m EUR or annual balance sum less than 43 m EUR
- Minimum of two years existence of the enterprise
- Less than 250 employees
- at least one employee in full time with social insurance contribution

Enterprises with less than 10 employees get a grant up to 80 percent to the costs of the process counselling. Enterprises with 10 to 249 employees get a grant up to 50 percent. The rest of the costs are accepted by the enterprises. The counselling has a duration of maximum ten days and costs of 1,000 Euro per counselling day.

6. PARTNERS AND AIMS

The program gets its expert knowledge from the “Initiative New Quality of Work” (INQA) which is a national initiative of state and non-state stakeholders in the context of work in Germany. It is connected with the Skilled Workers Offensive (Fachkräfteoffensive) of the Federal Government in Germany. The program is financed by grants of the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (BMAS). The overall coordination and regulation of the support program within the “program coordination office” (Programmkoordinierungsstelle PKS) is incorporated in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (BMAS). The “program coordination office” is responsible for the professional monitoring and support of the first counselling helplines. The first counselling helplines coordinate the counselling of enterprises in the region. They are the first contact person for the enterprises and all their questions regarding support and they coordinate the pool of counselling practitioners.

Responsible for the financial administrative implementation of the program is the Federal Office of Administration (Bundesverwaltungsamt BVA). It is responsible for the grant and pay-off of the support and for the administration of the grant.

7. FOUR CENTRAL ACTION FIELDS

Four action fields can be used to stimulate changes in personal politics. The counselling program is aligned in these fields.

Personal management: a modern personal management considers individual requirements of employees, integrates them actively in all decisions and gives support considering actual conditions of living.

Equality of opportunity and diversity: Enterprises generate new potentials when they respect specifics of the staff and provide chances of development to all employees – independent of age, sex and family and cultural background.

Health: To get the staff and the enterprise productive in the future there need to be adequate offers to support physical and psychological health. Employees should be sensibilized for a healthy daily routine.

Knowledge and competence: Knowledge must be retained in the enterprise and handed over within the company. The digital structural change besides requires new competences and qualifications. For this, employees need specific further education. The learning motivation of the staff has also to be fostered.

8. REVIEW: THE MODEL PHASE OF THE PROGRAM (EVALUATION)

The program started with a model project phase between October 2012 and December 2014 initiated by the Federal Ministry of Work and Social Affairs (BMAS).

In this period the program worked with around 3,000 enterprises in 30 model regions and more than 36 regional first counselling helplines. Around 95 percent of the enterprises, which had a free of cost first counselling helplines, subsequent participated in a supported specialist counselling of the program. The participants were SME from all branches and from all federal states. Overall, the program had in this manner contact with 100.000 employees throughout Germany.

Enterprises which have joined to model phase of the program appreciate, that for the first time also small enterprises profit from the new support. Besides, they emphasize the practical alignment of the program particularly caused by the high amount of participation of employees. A large majority of SME notes that the strived effects of the professional counselling have been reached. Two-thirds of the SME already have taken or planned activities, on one's own expense, to generate further activities to continue the processes initiated by the professional counselling und to ensure sustainability.

REFERENCES

1. Unternehmenswert Mensch Homepage, siehe <https://www.unternehmens-wert-mensch.de/das-programm/uebersicht/> (19.4.2021)